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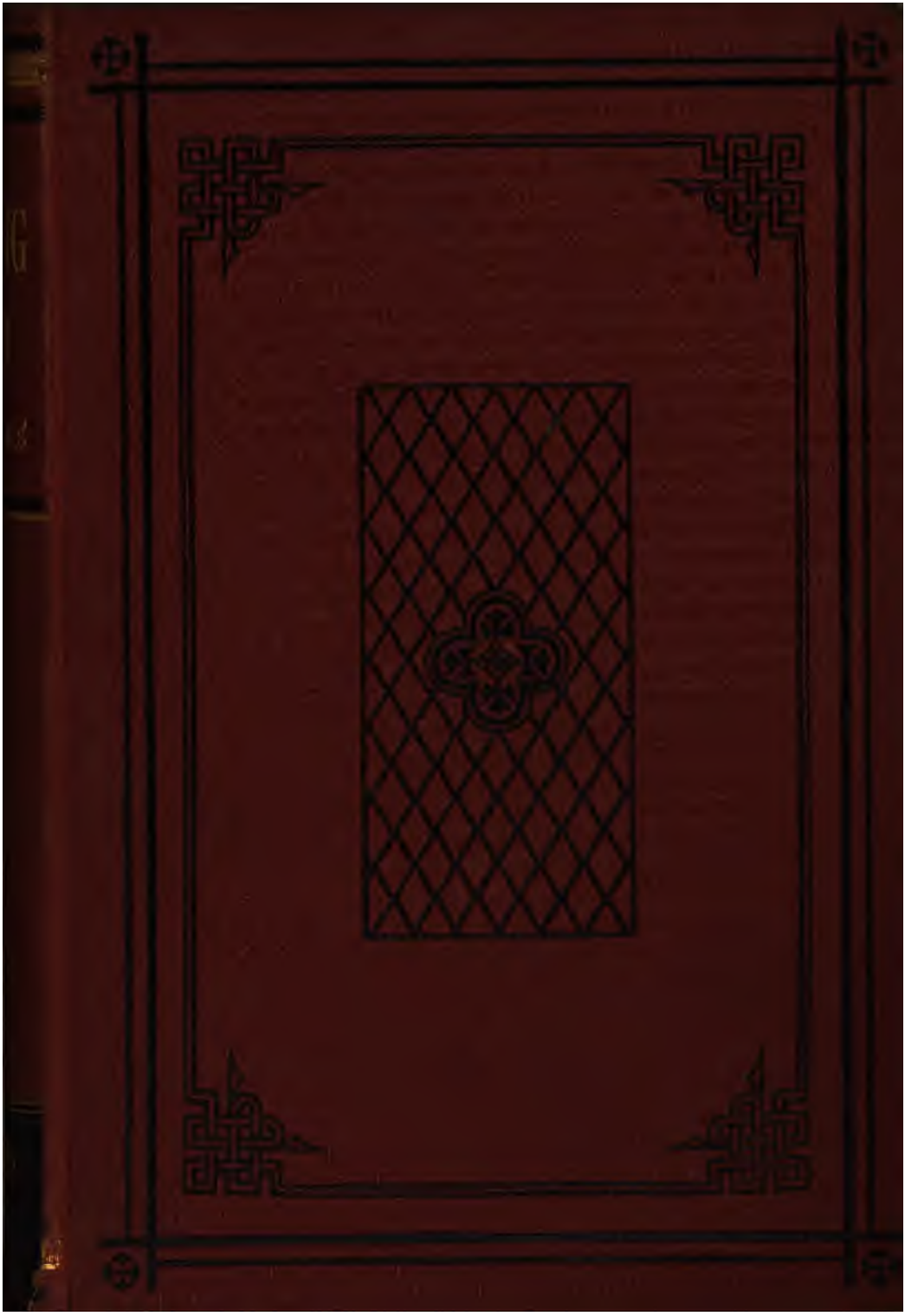

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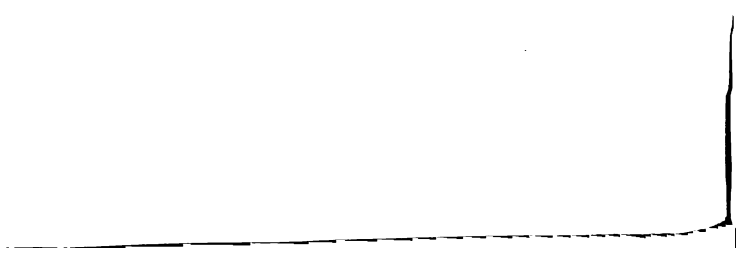

THE IMPENDING SWORD.

THE IMPENDING SWORD.

LONDON:
ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, PANCRAS ROAD, N.W.

THE

IMPENDING SWORD.

A Novel.

BY

EDMUND YATES,

AUTHOR OF 'BLACK SHEEP,' 'THE ROCK AHEAD,' 'THE YELLOW FLAG,' ETC. ETC.

'Put we our quarrel to the will of Heaven,
Who, when He sees the hours ripe on earth,
Will rain hot vengeance on the offenders' heads.'
SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
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Book the Second.

THE CRIME.

CHAPTER I.

DOWN TO LIVERPOOL.

BRYAN DUVAL had not forgotten his promise to Miss Montressor. Early in the morning of that eventful day, when she and Mr. Dolby had parted so strangely, and before she had even yet shaken off the extra slumber occasioned by the fatigue of the Richmond dinner, the fair actress had received a letter from her *entrepreneur*, which ran thus:

'My dear Clara,—The business which I feared might possibly have detained me has been smoothed over, and we positively sail on Saturday, in the Cuba. We shall go down to Liverpool by the twelve o'clock train, on Friday, stop the night at the

Adelphi, and have plenty of time to see our traps—and what with music scores, prompt-books, and costumes, I have a tolerable amount of luggage—comfortably on board one of the first tenders which will be despatched to the ship. I think we shall be a pleasant party. I have concluded engagements with Mrs. Regan, for old women and heavies, with Skrymshire for first low comedy, and with Cooington for walking gentleman and utility. He is a nice-looking young fellow, can make-up very fairly, and will, consequently, make an excellent foil for me; all the other people I can get over there, but these are absolutely necessary. Cooington will be especially valuable. You are young, and your ideas of the dreadful are, probably, vague, but when you have once seen an American *jeune premier*, with his peculiar style of hair and costume, they will immediately become definite.

'By the way, my dear, talking about costumes, I think it would be advisable

that you should have two first-rate evening gowns—don't fly into a rage now. Your toilette yesterday was particularly good, and I have no doubt you show quite as much good taste in your evening dress, but I want something exceptionally stylish; you will be seen a great deal more in public over there than you are here. You will probably have a reception, as they call it, from one of their artistic societies, and on off-nights will have to show-up at the opera, or one of the other theatres; and as our good friends on the other side attach immense importance to dress—and rightly too, according to my notions—I want you at once to send a pattern-body to Madame Lagrange, 118 Rue Vivienne. That's all! You need take no further trouble about the matter. I have written to old Lagrange by this post—I have known her ever since I was a boy—and told her exactly what you want; for my sake the old lady will put on all steam, and you will have

your gowns in time to pack them for America. I have also desired Madame Lagrange to send the bill to me, a liberty which, I trust, under the circumstances, you will excuse.

'I have an enormous number of things to get ready before I start; the rehearsal of *Pickwick's Progress* to superintend at the Gravity, and an action to bring against a rascal in the North who has been producing an exact copy of the *Cruiskeen Lawn*, fights, songs, Irish wake, and all under the title of the *Jug of Punch*. The copyright law in this country is disgraceful. By the way, did you see those absurd remarks in the *Earwig* about me and Mr. Dickens, in connection with *Pickwick's Progress?* I mention this in case I may not be able to call upon you before we start, so that you may be perfectly sure to be at Euston very soon after eleven. Till then good-bye.

'Yours always,

'BRYAN DUVAL.

'P.S.—What a good dinner it was yesterday, and how very jolly we all were! I have taken a great fancy to Foster, he seems to be an exceptionally good fellow. He talks of coming down to Liverpool to see us off. If he does, I shall make a point of giving him a dinner at the Adelphi the night before we sail—they have some green turtle there—but women don't understand these things.'

'Mr. Foster is an exceptionally good fellow,' said Miss Montressor, laying down the letter, 'and you are another, Bryan Duval. This experience confirms me in my opinion, that whenever you hear men bitter and disparaging in their remarks about a man who is before the world, and who is successful, he is sure to prove remarkably pleasant, agreeable, and kind-hearted. Now I am sure nothing could be more thoughtful or more delicate than Mr. Duval's suggestion about those gowns, and what a

queer fellow he is too!' she said, taking up the letter again; 'fancy his writing about a "pattern-body"—he seems to know everything.'

By this time the fact of the great actor-author's departure for America, taking with him a select troupe for the purpose of playing certain of his own pieces, had been heralded in the newspapers, and had created as much excitement as even he could have wished. Most of the journals congratulated Mr. Duval on the engagement, and the Americans on the fact that they were about to renew their acquaintance with that distinguished combination of literature and art, who would add fresh laurels to the wreath which had already adorned his brows, and from this they proceeded in a tone of patronage towards the Western hemisphere generally, telling it how thankful it ought to be in having such a school of talent as England to draw upon for its artists.

Some of the other journals, however, the conductors or writers of which had a personal pique against Mr. Duval, did not think so strongly on the matter. They averred, roundly enough, that the autumn was the usual time for English actors to go out to America, and not the spring; and that probably the reason which induced Mr. Duval to take his departure from his native country at the present time was that he was entirely played out and used up there, and he hoped to recoup himself by repeating his previous success in America, an expectation which would be undoubtedly disappointed.

Mr. Duval read these various reports with equal delight. He liked being praised; but he did not in the least mind being found fault with.

'I like to see 'em pitch in,' he would say, slowly rubbing his hands together, with a broad grin, such as those who had only seen him in his melo-dramatic parts

on the stage could never believe him capable of giving. 'I like to see them pitch in; it shows their interest in me. I would sooner that they would write about me with bradawls dipped in vitriol, rather than that they should say nothing. This,' touching one of the journals before him, 'is Cosby's doing. Cosby is a stupid ass. I have told him so in print and by word of mouth many a time and oft. I have dropped down hof and heavy upon Cosby frequently, and he don't forgive that. When my *Varco the Vampire* was produced at the Parthenon, Cosby's original comedy of *Gold and Gloom* (taken from a play of Maquet and Dumas, produced at the Porte St. Martin in '52—I have it there in the bookcase, and can show it to you) was brought out at the Gravity. *Varco* ran for one hundred and fifty nights, when I stopped it myself, as I wanted a little chamois shooting in Styria, and *Gold and Gloom* fizzled out in a fortnight. Cosby didn't like that

—he don't like the notion that my *Pickwick's Progress* is about to be produced at the Gravity, which he looks upon somewhat as his own theatre; he don't like, what he knows to be the fact, that I have a splendid engagement with Van Buren in New York, and so he writes these lies about me, thinking to rile me and to draw me out. No good, dear Cosby; no good, dear boy. There is nothing makes a venomous ruffian like that so wild as to completely ignore his attack, and if you chance to meet him in the street, greet him with the utmost politeness; you need not take his hand, but you also need not put your fist into his face. Cosby will watch the papers daily, looking for an indignant letter from me in reply to his screed; but he will find none; and if I see him at the first night of *Pickwick's Progress*, I shall wag my head at him, and express a hope that he is pleased with the entertainment.'

But though he declined to resent this

newspaper controversy, Mr. Duval found more than enough to occupy his mind and to fill up his time. Half a dozen needy persons belonging to the theatrical profession—not adventurers, and in no way dishonest—simply men and women who, from stress of circumstances, had undertaken to do something for which they were not in the least qualified, and who consequently had gone to the wall, were simultaneously struck with the brilliant idea that it would be a remarkably good thing for Mr. Duval if he took a temporary farewell of the British public in a performance the proceeds of which should be devoted to their benefit. Others there were who addressed him on the strength of having read that he was about to take a company with him to perform his pieces in the United States, and at once expressing themselves as perfectly certain that such company would not be complete unless they, the writers, joined it in prominent positions with high salaries.

In fact, the notice of his departure brought upon him all the horde of impertinent correspondents who prey upon a public man's time, and rob him of such leisure as he might otherwise have; autograph hunters, photographers, who could make it convenient to receive him at any time, sanctimonious begging-letter writers, who declared that his path across the ocean would neither be happy nor successful unless he were blessed with the inward consciousness of having left behind him half a crown to succour modest misery in distress.

Applications such as these Mr. Duval treated with sovereign contempt—he had quite enough real business on hand. His rooms in Vernon-chambers were very much changed from their normal condition; all the nick-nacks were put away, all the pictures and handsome furniture covered over, and in the midst stood enormous boxes, some crammed to repletion, others yet gaping as it were for food, all

bearing the great actor's name in large red letters, all marked with the word 'Hold.'

Thither, threading their way among the packages which littered the landings as well as the apartments, came those anxious to have a last few words with Mr. Duval. Mr. Moss Marks, the manager of the Gravity, was there, nervously anxious about the forthcoming *Pickwick's Progress*, and constantly endeavouring to cut down costly items of furniture and decoration which Duval had insisted upon being provided. Mr. Hodgkinson, too, came to impress upon his friend his parting injunctions, that if he saw anything in the States likely to make a sensation, any 'fakement' likely to hit up the British public, he should wire him at once and send it over by the next boat. There, too, was the great impresario, Wuff, who began to find that camels and coryphées spelt bankruptcy as well as Shakespeare, and he was eager to beg a

few last words of advice from the omniscient Bryan Duval before he started. Mr. Foster looked in, too, once or twice, to see how his friend was getting on, and to ask whether he could be any use in helping him in his preparations for the voyage.

Nor was Miss Montressor without her visitors. Two days after the announcement of her intended visit to America appeared in the Sunday papers, a mysterious old lady, neatly dressed in black silk, with an old-fashioned bonnet, appeared at the Brompton villa, and giving her name as Mrs. Porter, begged permission to speak for a few minutes to the lady of the house. The page, who, though a sharp boy, was not yet sufficiently versed in his business to gauge the social position of visitors, was about to usher the old lady into the drawing-room, but Justine, happening to pass downstairs at the moment, promptly bade her take a seat in the hall, and took upon herself the task of announcing her arrival.

Miss Montressor started very much at hearing the name, but recovering herself, desired that the visitor should be shown to her bedroom. The old lady bowed when she received the summons; and Justine noticed that she trembled very much as she ascended the stairs. What passed during the interview Justine did not exactly know, though she loitered about the passage to gather as much as she could. First, she heard her mistress's voice in high sharp tones of rebuke, and the old lady apparently pleading. Miss Montressor's voice then softened very much, and the conversation was carried on in a low earnest undertone, mingled, so Justine thought, with sobs from one, if not from both, and just before the door opened she could have sworn she heard a sound as of many kisses, broken with words of blessing and farewell. And Miss Montressor's eyes were very red, and her brilliant complexion rather tear-blurred, after her visitor's departure; and

though she speedily rectified this irregularity, she remained singularly quiet and subdued all that evening.

Also, just before the day of her departure, arrived Miss Thomasina Campbell and Miss Georgina Goss, formerly Miss Montressor's colleagues at the T.R.D.L., where they had many a bitter quarrel together; but now that she was going to rid them of her presence, and to interfere no more, her devoted friends. The visit of these young ladies was ostensibly to bid their dear Clara good-bye, but in reality to endeavour to ascertain from her what terms she had got, and what parts she was likely to play, and to look at the dresses she was going to take with her. As regards the first items, they failed lamentably—Miss Montressor spoke vaguely of enormous sums, and of 'leading business,' but declined to enter into any particulars—but as regards the latter, they were gratified to the highest extent. Miss Montressor showed them all

her pretty things, and even went to the extent of unpacking an enormous trunk for the sake of displaying the two splendid gowns which had duly arrived from Madame Lagrange, and which were pronounced by staid Miss Campbell to be 'truly superb,' and by giggling Miss Goss to be 'perfect ducks.' When they had seen all the pretty things, and partaken of sherry and seltzer-water, with which gay little Miss Goss moistened a cigarette, they took their leave, not without warning their hostess to beware of the fascinations of Bryan Duval, who, they insinuated, was a heartless wretch who made love to everybody.

Finally, Mr. Foster paid his first and last visit to the young lady in whom he seemed to have taken so kindly an interest.

'You are surprised to see me here, Miss Montressor,' he said, 'more especially when you recollect that you never asked me to call upon you.'

'I am very much delighted to see you, Mr. Foster,' said Miss Montressor frankly, extending her hand to him, 'and I should be more pleased if I did not think that your presence here meant that there was no chance of your sailing with us in the Cuba, on Saturday.'

'It does mean that, indeed,' said Mr. Foster. 'I shall not be able to complete my business so early, but I hope to follow you in a very short time. You are kind enough to say you wish I were coming with you, Miss Montressor, but you cannot regret the impossibility half so much as I do. I am home sick, and that talk which we had the other day about my wife and my belongings has made me more than ever anxious to get back to them.'

'I verily believe it was the chance of another chat about them that procured me the pleasure of this visit,' said Miss Montressor. 'But, however, you shall not be gratified this time. You shall talk to me

of nothing but what I shall do in New York, where I shall go, what I shall see, and to whom I must make myself most gracious and agreeable in order to insure my success. By the way,' she added, turning suddenly round to him, 'one thing struck me in thinking over our talk the other day. This business of which you think so much, and in connection with which you came over here, it must be still going on in New York, is it not?'

'Certainly.'

'But not by itself; you must have left it in somebody's charge?'

'Of course, in the charge of my most intimate friend.'

'O, indeed,' said Miss Montressor. 'And Mrs. Foster, she is doubtless with her family—father or mother, or something of that sort?'

'No, indeed, poor Helen is an orphan; she remains at home, in our own house, but I have desired my friend to look after her.'

'The same friend?' inquired Miss Montressor.

'The same friend!'

'O, indeed,' said Miss Montressor, in the same tone. 'It must be a great comfort to you to think that there is some one to whom you can confide your business and your wife with a perfect feeling of security.'

And then they talked of subjects connected with theatricals and New York until Mr. Foster took his departure.

At length the eventful Friday morning arrived, and though, from the ordinary condition of the Euston Station, it would seem impossible that there should ever be any extra bustle there, some little additional excitement might have been noticed. Mr. Bryan Duval, never oblivious of the chances of advertisement, had written to the traffic manager, enclosing a slip cut from the newspaper, announcing his departure, and requesting some extra facili-

ties in the way of transport. The traffic manager, with great politeness, had ordered a saloon carriage to be placed at the disposal of the theatrical party; and thus their intended arrival became known. People who were waiting about on the platform, ordinary passengers and their friends, saw the handsome saloon carriage, and concluding immediately that it must be for some member of the Royal Family, or some other equally distinguished personage, lingered round it in the pleasant expectation of being gratified with the sight of a hat or a beard, the skirt of a robe or the end of a bonnet-string.

They were not, however, much disappointed when, upon inquiry, they learned who were really to be the occupants of the carriage. A live actor or actress in their ordinary citizen garb has an immense attraction for the many-headed, and Bryan Duval was both well known and popular; his very luggage, arriving, as it did, in a

huge break, interested them much, and they studied the enormous red letters announcing 'Bryan Duval, passenger per Cuba, New York, U.S.A.,' and the mysterious word 'Hold,' with a feeling akin to awe. The well-informed told the ignorant of the plays he had written and what characters he had played, what a magnificent fortune he had, and what a number of duchesses and marchionesses were dying of love for him.

The great actor was the first to arrive. Ordinary people travel in rough clothes, and drive to the station in a cab. Not so Mr. Bryan Duval. His belief in the necessity of advertising himself remained with him to the last, and the hoofs of the spanking chestnuts, as their master tooled them under the archway, roused the echoes of the Euston courtyard. No sign of vulgar luggage appeared in Mr. Duval's trap—the only hint that he was about to travel might have been found in the natty morocco-

leather courier's pouch, slung over his shoulder by a trap; otherwise he might have been going down to a picnic at St. Albans, for he was dressed in a suit of gray dittos, wore a crimson tie, shiny-tip jean boots, and his usual curly-brimmed hat.

The little crowd gathered round him as he drew up to the station, but he pretended to take no notice of them, and to be absorbed in giving directions to his groom. When these were concluded, he was apparently about moving off, when the groom touched his hat, and said, with something like a quiver in his voice, 'Take the liberty of wishing you good-bye, sir—happy voyage and a safe return.'

'Thank you, James, very much,' said Mr. Duval, in his clearest tones. 'Take care of the horses—see that Black Bess and Tantivy are always properly exercised, and remember me very kindly to your wife.' And Mr. Duval moved off midst a murmur of sympathetic admiration from the crowd.

'Sharp fellow that James,' he muttered to himself, as he entered the ticket office; 'spoke that line I taught him deuced well. I shall probably be able to make something of him on the stage when I come back.'

His elation was a little dazed at the sight of Mrs. Regan, who, running up to him, clasped him by both hands, and whose appearance was scarcely calculated to impress bystanders with admiration. This worthy old person, who was of Hibernian descent, and had what is known amongst her countrymen as a 'potato' face, was dressed in a voluminous chintz gown, like bed furniture, and, slung on her arm, carried a check wicker basket, like a soft chess-board, with what was obviously the neck of a bottle protruding from it. He was gratified, however, by the appearance of Mr. Cooington, who, with a feeling that he was about to spend ten days on the ocean, arrived at Euston Station in a yachting costume, a

straw hat with a very narrow brim, and a ribbon with 'Plover' in gold letters round it. Mr. Skyrmshire, the low-comedy man, had apparently adopted some of his theatrical wardrobe for travelling purposes, and consequently arrived in a suit of such enormous stripes, that in it he looked like a zebra on his hind legs. He was a practical as well as a poetical humourist too, and combining jocosity with business, carried about with him a number of small labels, printed 'Go and hear Skrymshire, the brilliant Momus,' and gummed at the back, with which he adorned the velveteen jackets of all the porters with whom he came in contact.

And then Mr. Foster arrived, and then Miss Montressor, looking very pretty, and dressed with great simplicity and good taste. Mr. Duval offered her his arm, and led the way to the saloon carriage, the others following. Then rushed out to take a last look that the baggage was all safe,

to compliment the inspector and tip the porters, and returned. A whistle, a shriek, Mr. Skrymshire said, 'Give him his head, John,' Mrs. Regan breathed hard and cried, 'Now we're off,' the train moved on a little, and then stopped.

A porter put his head into the carriage in which the actor's party had already begun to lean back, and realise the fact that they had started, and inquired whether the gentleman who owned the portmanteau left at the station an hour ago, and which he had just put into the van, according to orders, was there. The occupants of the carriage glanced at each other, shook their heads in a general negative, and Bryan Duval answered for them, 'No, the gentleman was not there.'

'Beg pardon, gentlemen,' said the porter, 'but I can't find the owner of the portmanteau.'

'And you want your tip, I suppose?' said Bryan Duval, in an undertone, to the

man, who was standing on the step of the carriage, with his hands on the door.

'No, sir, I don't,' said the man; 'the gentleman paid me to look after the portmanteau. I only wanted to make sure that he was here, so as it shouldn't go amongst missing luggage, but I can't find him—he isn't in the train.' He fell back, made a sign to the guard, and the train moved on this time, to pursue its way unbrokenly.

'What a horrid nuisance!' said Miss Montressor to Mr. Foster. 'I can't imagine anything more worrying than losing one's luggage.'

'And yet,' said Mr. Foster, 'it is one of those things no one gets pitied for. For my part, I always stick to mine in this country, where matters of that kind are certainly not regulated with the intelligence and attention to public convenience they are amongst us. However, I daresay this gentleman and his portmanteau will not be long parted. That porter was an

honest fellow. Shall I pull the window up?'

'No, thanks,' said Miss Montressor. 'I am perfectly comfortable. You have very good notions of travelling, Mr. Foster, and have chosen my seat with admirable discretion. Where is the library?—O, overhead, I see. Not that I care much for reading in a train; it tries one's eyes. Do you always read in the train?'

'That depends on my company,' said Mr. Foster. 'I don't feel inclined to read to-day.'

'Then suppose we make a law that nobody is to read?' said Miss Montressor, looking round upon her companions with the proud consciousness of being a leading lady in every sense of the word.

'Never make a law unless you are sure of its being obeyed,' said Bryan Duval drily, as he settled his travelling cap, and ensconced his head in a convenient angle of the partition between his seat and that of

his fair neighbour, opposite to whom Mr. Foster was placed, and immediately immersed himself in the pages of the *Times*.

The journey was a very pleasant one; every one was good-humoured, and Miss Montressor had her own way. She and Mr. Foster talked a good deal more than any of their companions, but the tone of the conversation was necessarily general. Thus, there was no reference on his part to the domestic circumstances which had annoyed Miss Montressor when he confided them to her at Richmond, and her versatile nature had enabled her almost entirely to dismiss the recollection of her sister Bess, except in the general sense of being rather glad than otherwise that she should have an opportunity of seeing her.

In her present sanguine mood, Miss Montressor doubted not that she should be able to induce Bess to say, or to leave unsaid, precisely whatever she pleased to indicate—at the worst, this was an annoyance

to be postponed for consideration, until after her arrival on the other side; she was not going to trouble herself about it prematurely.

To tell the truth about Miss Montressor, she thought very little of Mr. Dolby during the pleasant hours of her journey to Liverpool. It would be good fun finding him in New York, and either making up the quarrel which had marked their parting or not making it up, precisely as it should suit her humour and her convenience, when the time had arrived. That, too, she need not think of beforehand. Altogether, Miss Montressor could recall few days in her life which had passed more completely to her satisfaction than that of her departure from London, and she mentioned the fact to Mr. Foster, when, for the first time, she found herself out of hearing of her companions on the arrival of the train, when he gave her his arm to walk along the platform at Lime-street.

During a momentary pause in order to rally their party, the attention of Miss Montressor and Mr. Foster was attracted to the unloading of the luggage van. A solitary portmanteau had been chucked upon the platform with a contemptuous indifference, which is the destiny of waifs and strays among luggage.

'I am sure that is the unclaimed portmanteau,' said Miss Montressor; 'looks new too. What will they do with it?'

'Put it in the parcel-office, of course,' said Mr. Foster, 'for the present, and then they forget all about it.'

The portmanteau, a shiny black one of the most commonplace appearance, lay upon the pavement until all the claimed luggage had been disposed of and wheeled away on trucks to its various destinations; then the waif was carried by a porter to the parcel-office and there deposited, with a brief intimation to the official who resided behind a sliding window, amid huge barricades of

packing-cases, hampers, and every description of impedimenta, from camel trunks to brown-paper parcels and stray hand-bags, 'That this 'ere box, name o' Dunn, hadn't been owned.'

Travellers to Liverpool by all trains, at all hours, are a motley crew; all ranks and classes of society, all industries, all circumstances, may be found represented in the voyagers going towards the great outlet of England. The train which conveyed Bryan Duval and his troop was no exception, but rather a notable example of this truth. Only two components of the crowd which were whirled from the great social to the great commercial capital on that particular day have any interest for us; they are our theatrical friends, and one other man, a solitary and insignificant unit among the number.

This man wore a sailor's dress, and carried a parcel, done up in a bit of tarpaulin, under his arm. He had arrived at Euston

Station a few minutes before the party whose departure had formed a feature of the day; had stood wholly unnoticed among the third-class passengers crowding that portion of the platform opposite to the pens appointed for their use, and had quietly taken his seat in the farthest corner of the last compartment in the train. There was nothing remarkable in this man's appearance or manner. His sailor's clothes were clean, and fitted with characteristic looseness. He did not remove his cap or relinquish his hold of his tarpaulin bundle, which he placed upon his knees, and folding his arms upon it, kept them there during the whole of the journey. He exchanged not a word with his fellow passengers, except a mechanic and his family about to exchange the used-up old world for the new and happy land—though they thought him a morose surly sort of fellow, no doubt; but they were full of their own hopes, interests, and regrets, which they discussed with the sim-

ple unreserve of the poor, and, after a few minutes, did not notice him.

He was a dark-complexioned man, with a rough red beard and hair to match, and had probably but recently adopted the avocation of a sailor, for his hands were rather delicate for a man of that class, and had evidently had no prolonged acquaintance with the ropes or great familiarity with tar. Though he travelled down the whole way to Liverpool without appearing to be conscious of the presence of his immediate companions, this sailor seemed to have some attraction towards the more distinguished passengers by the train. He lingered for a few minutes on the platform on their arrival at Lime-street, though he had put no luggage in the van, and had no occasion to wait while its contents were being turned out and sorted; and during this delay he surveyed,—with an intentness probably caused by his knowledge of their celebrity,—the party of actors as they took their way to the

exit. He was but a few steps behind them when they reached the entrance of the station, and he stood in the doorway while they crossed the street on foot and entered the hospitable portals of the Adelphi Hotel, where their rooms had been engaged. When they had gone in, and were quite hidden from his view, he still lingered; indeed, the greater part of the burden which the train had carried had been discharged from the station before this desultory mariner moved on. Even then he only crossed the street, still hugging his tarpaulin bundle under his arm, and slouched along under the windows of the Adelphi, as though the place had some attraction for him.

The contrasts offered by London itself are hardly greater than those to be found in Liverpool; the physical division of the great town into high and low is not more marked than its moral division into luxury and want, into respectability and infamy, into leisure and toil. There is a calm, tran-

quil, well-bred comfort about some of the uncommercial districts of Liverpool as characteristic and as striking as the splendour of its great streets, the long line of shops, each displaying the products of the teeming wealth of many countries, and are lost in those wonderful masses of warehouses, stores, factories, and shipping offices, which epitomise the whole history of commerce in its greatest forms, while they exhibit it in its minutest detail. The actual story of the world in its most practical, and at the same time not in its least romantic, aspect may be read by him who runs—if his hurried way should take him past the great landing-stages which project upon the Mersey. All the interests of life in its present crowded phase, and in its extended intercourse of business and of greatness, find their symbols there; its transitoriness, its change, its tumultuous variety, its youthful hope, its keenest anxieties, its bitterest partings, have found their theatre there since the first ship

brought in the wealth of a foreign land, and the first ship carried out the produce of our own. The steadiest industry, the most inveterate vagabondism, find their representatives among the population of Liverpool; there is no place in existence in which the student of human nature may discover more to interest, to edify, to puzzle, and to appal him.

The sailor who had travelled by the five-o'clock train to Liverpool was seemingly possessed by a great curiosity concerning the commercial city. He had not eaten or drunk since early in the day; but this circumstance, rarely devoid of interest to persons of his class, seemed to trouble him but little. He had not turned into any eating-house, he had not visited any drinking-bar; but he took his way slowly, and always meditatively, along the streets which led to the water-side. In Water-street he lingered long. The great business centres and conduits were emptying themselves of the

swarms of human beings whose business lies in the deep waters, who, if they did not go down to the sea in ships themselves, spent their lives in business matters connected with those who do; hurrying crowds jostled the sailor upon the pathways, crowds whose backs were turned upon the direction in which he was going; and as he took his way at a lounging pace, which contrasted curiously with the vigorous hurry and breaking-up air of bustle around him which marks the close of the business day in Liverpool, and the 'coming on of evening mild,' with its welcome recreation, at home or elsewhere, according to the diversity of tastes. The water-side was almost deserted when he debouched upon it from Water-street under the shadow of the huge warehouses.

In the dim light the prosaic landing-stage looked almost picturesque—shortly to be turned to a silver radiance by the yet unrisen moon; the waters of the Mersey lay in solemn calm; in the dim light, the

long lines of huge warehouses, with their cumbrous apparatus of crank and pulley, of windlass and stage, looked more than ever like a series of gigantic gallows, prepared for a general execution. The mind speedily loses itself in the mere contemplation of their resources in the way of sacks and bales. To stray into considerations of cotton is to get lost, to think of pig-iron is distraction; the best way is to accept it all as a picture, happily unaccompanied at that hour of the night by the maddening noise of the day-time, and to be satisfied, without attempting to comprehend them, with the vastness, with the wealth, of Liverpool.

Probably this was not the line on which the sailor's thoughts were running when he examined the before-mentioned long range of warehouses, which lie parallel to the great landing-stage, with the wide roadway lying between, to inspire the observer with constant wonder how, by any effort of human industry, it is ever kept in a state of

repair. His examination was minute, careful, and marked by one peculiarity. He laid his hand on every door as he passed it by, giving the sturdy panel a strong and stealthy push; in every instance but one, the response to this movement was the steady resistance of a stout bolt. One door, very far down the range, and in a place where already the profoundest tranquillity reigned, fell open at his touch, and the sailor, with a lounging gait of perfectly idle curiosity, ready, if challenged, to apologise for an intrusion on that score, passed into the yard to which the complying portal gave admittance.

It was some minutes before he emerged and began to retrace his steps towards Water-street; but he had now discarded his lounging gait, his step was purpose-like, quick, and wholly out of unison with his dress and appearance; nor had he any longer the uncertain discovery-making manner of a man unacquainted with the locality

in which he finds himself for the first time.

He threaded his way with great rapidity through a number of small streets and lanes, best described by the generic term of 'slums,' quite regardless of the sights and sounds in perfect harmony with the neighbourhood, which was a particularly villanous one; he bent his steps to a low public-house, and close to the river.

Here he called for bread-and-cheese, of which he ate sparingly, and for a pot of beer, of which he drank a very small quantity—the meal did not seem to recommend itself to his palate; here, too, he spoke no word, and looked no one in the face, but he passed in and out quite disregarded.

The drinking-den—for it was hardly more—was, indeed, crowded, as it was at most hours of the day, and as far into the night as the police would permit, but its occupants were either drinking or quarrelling, or both, and too much engaged in

these pursuits to notice the surly newcomer.

Having thus sparingly satisfied the hunger and thirst which he must have been experiencing, the sailor sought for a place of repose. He selected for this purpose a common lodging-house, much in use by men of his craft when on shore, under circumstances which may be briefly described as 'down on their luck.' It was a dirty, ill-ventilated, wretched place, where beds of the very coarsest sacking, with very repulsive-looking bed-clothes, were stretched out in long lines on two sides of the low whitewashed room; a carpetless and matless lane ran up the centre, encumbered with the discarded garments of the occupants of the beds, and every accessory of the scene was unpleasant. The sailor seemed indisposed to avail himself of even the full extent of the accommodation which this uninviting hostelry afforded, limited as it was; he abstained from undressing himself,

but flung himself down in his clothes upon the bed which was pointed out to him, and which he was congratulated by the proprietor of this hideous retreat upon having been so fortunate as to secure, as it was the only one which had not already a tenant.

This was not exactly a place in which good order might be expected to reign. Its temporary occupants were in many instances drunk, in very few decent, in almost all noisy; but the new-comer contributed no more to the horrid merriment of the sleeping den than he had contributed to the conviviality of the drinking den during that day. He met all attempts at questioning with a sullen growl; and placing his tarpaulin bundle under his head for a pillow, he soon fell, or seemed to fall, into a heavy slumber.

CHAPTER II.

TRAPPED.

THE normal state of the Adelphi Hotel at Liverpool is one of such bustle and confusion, that when the entire establishment goes stark staring mad, as is the case twice a year, on the occasions of the Grand National Steeplechase and the Waterloo Meeting, the people are not inclined to regard the eccentricity as anything to be wondered at. Passing a night at the Adelphi, you are liable to come across the man who went out to California five-and-twenty years ago with the full determination never to revisit the motherland where the first half of his life had been so thrown away, but who, his fortune made and the nostalgia strong upon him, arrived last night from New York, to

travel for six months like a gentleman in the country where, for a quarter of a century, he had starved and slaved. Or you are equally likely to run into the arms of the elderly friend whom you have always considered as a fixed item of London life, but who, having heard a rumour 'that things are going wrong out there,' is starting by the next day's outward-bound mail to satisfy himself. The halls and passages of the Adelphi are always crammed with sea-going chests and Saratoga boxes, and deck-chairs, more or less maimed; and there is generally a dozen of champagne being cracked in some of the rooms to drink the health of the captain who has just brought the good ship safely over, or success to the captain who is just going to take the good ship out; and there are newspaper reporters flying to and fro to get lists of passengers, or details of any occurrences on the voyage, and relations of the newly-arrived, who are very much elated, and relations of the de-

parting, who are very much depressed, and whose excessive emotion in their case contrasts curiously with the steady-going business tone of the members of the establishment.

It was not to be supposed that a man of Mr. Bryan Duval's foresight would have neglected writing beforehand to secure rooms, any more than that he would have omitted sending a hint of his intended arrival to two or three members of the local press with whom he was on terms of friendship. Consequently, when the theatrical party from London walked into the house, they were not merely received with gracious smiles from the three young ladies in the bar, and with portentous grins from Sam the boots (not naturally a good-natured man, but an old acquaintance of Mr. Duval's, and the recipient of many orders for the upper boxes when that gentleman was staying there on a starring tour), but with a warm acclamation from Mr. Lavrock, the

popular editor of the *Liverpool Lion*, and two or three of his comrades. It was not Mr. Lavrock's fault that he was not a London editor; it was the one hope of his life; but being unable to accomplish the feat, and finding himself tied to Liverpool, he revenged himself on the fate which had dictated, as his duty, the pulverisation of the Mayor, the castigation of the Corporation, and the flaying of the Mersey Board, by devoting every minute of his off-time to London things and London people, by running to the metropolis at all times when he could get away, and by acting as general agent for every London literary or theatrical celebrity.

It had not wanted the presence of these gentlemen to remind Bryan Duval that he had intended giving a little banquet that evening in honour of Mr. Foster; but when he saw them, he at once thought that they would not be merely pleasant additions to the party, but that they might be the means

of giving it world-wide publicity by inserting a neat little paragraph in the next morning's editions, which he would take over with him, and have copied immediately after arrival in the New York journals. Mr. Lavrock and his friends would be delighted to accept the invitation, and the party separated with the understanding that they were to meet at seven o'clock, the travellers going to their bedrooms to rest themselves after their journey, and the newspaper men to their offices, to prepare that little paragraph concerning which Mr. Duval had dropped a hint into the ear of each of them.

The Adelphi can give a dinner when it has a mind, and it had a mind this day. The turtle was superb; so good that Mr. Foster, who had had two or three rather sharp culinary arguments with Mr. Duval since their acquaintance, was compelled to acknowledge that on one point, at least, he had been wrong, and that he had never, even at the Brevoort House in New York,

tasted better soup than that then set before him; and when dinner was over, Mr. Duval made a very prolonged epigrammatic speech, proposing Mr. Foster's health, and Mr. Foster, with that self-possession and flow of language so characteristic of his countrymen, returned thanks. And then Mr. Lavrock stood up and exhausted the dictionary of flattery upon Bryan Duval, who, in responding, remarked that he hoped in a couple of months or so to give another dinner to almost the same party in the same place, on his return from what he intended should be a prosperous run; and then, as they were most of them tired, and had to get up betimes, the party broke up.

When Mr. Foster came down the next morning, he found Bryan Duval, already the centre of an admiring crowd, giving directions for the stowage of his luggage on the huge trucks which were to convey it to the steamer's tender. Mr. Duval had exchanged his costume of the previous day

for a yachting suit, and with an oilskin-covered straw hat, low patent-leather shoes, and striped silk socks, looked ready to lead off a hornpipe on any given cue. It had been arranged that they should breakfast in their rooms, and that Mr. Foster, who might be looked upon as accustomed to this kind of thing, should act as convoy to the company, Mr. Duval going in front to attend to the luggage. No sooner, therefore, was the truck duly piled than Bryan rattled off before it in a swift-going hansom, while Mr. Foster, Miss Montressor, and the others followed in a more sober vehicle.

The landing-stage at which the Cunard tender was lying was thronged on this occasion with even a more motley crowd than usual, for the paragraphs in the morning journals had announced to the actors the presence among them of their great colleague, and several of them had come down to see him off. Many of the young brokers and shipping clerks too had rushed away

from their offices for a few minutes to catch a glimpse of the popular artistes, and, as if to act as a corrective to the light tone of thought likely to be engendered by these people, a dark-bearded sombre-faced man, in the rustic garb of a Methodist preacher, made his way in and out amongst the crowd, distributing tracts to whoever would take them. There was no chance for his admirers mistaking any one else for Mr. Duval; that gentleman's activity was preternatural; and when the tender left the shore, they raised a little cheer, which he gratefully acknowledged by squeezing his hat over his chest exactly as he had done on many occasions after a successful first night's performance.

There was not much talk among the little party as they made their way to the ship. They praised her noble proportions as she lay at anchor in mid-stream, cast looks at the sky, and prophesied about the weather; but their hearts were too full to

say much, and they soon lapsed into silence. When they were once on board they, those who were to make the voyage, went straight to their state-rooms, and of our friends all remained there with the exception of Miss Montressor and Bryan Duval; the latter had still to see the luggage safely stowed away in the hold, the former came straight to Mr. Foster as he was standing very dejectedly on the hurricane-deck.

'I have just found another instance of your kindness, another thing to be grateful to you for.'

'Not in the least,' he replied with a sad smile. 'I had forgotten all about it; but I know there is no preventive of sea-sickness like champagne, and you can depend upon that case being genuine.'

'I wish you would have a bottle of it now,' she said. 'I think it would do you good.'

'I am afraid not,' he replied, with an attempt at gaiety. 'I am very depressed

and very dull, I know, and I do not think champagne would help me; the only cure for me will be when I find myself on this or some sister ship bound for home.'

'And Helen!' whispered Miss Montressor.

'And Helen,' he repeated gravely, lifting his hat as though invoking a blessing on the name.

Then the shore-bell rang, and Bryan Duval came up, and in a few words of kindly friendship, without a trace of professional affectation, spoke his thanks and adieux to his newly-made friend.

When Mr. Foster turned to Miss Montressor he tried to put on a light and rallying manner, but his voice broke, and the tears rose in his eyes. He muttered something, she could not distinguish what, for she herself was very much overcome, and vanished down the ladder and across the gangway.

Then the tender steamed away. Bryan

Duval and Clara Montressor, leaning over the rail, watched the figure of the man in whom alone they had an interest until it was undistinguishable; still stood gazing until the tender herself became a mere speck in the distance. Then he touched her on the arm.

'You had better go down and see to your things, Clara, my dear,' he said, in a kindly tone. 'We shall meet Foster again, I trust—he is a downright good fellow.'

'He is a gentleman,' sobbed Clara Montressor, 'and one of the best men on the face of the earth.'

By this time the good ship was standing out to sea.

* * * * *

Mr. Foster returned to his hotel in very low spirits; the mere sight of the sea, the mere sense of being on board a steamer, the bustle and departure, and the glad anticipations which he heard all around him, had produced a fit of home-sickness. It rarely

occurred that Mr. Foster, as the strictly business man, revolted against business in any shape, or resented its exactions, but he did so on this occasion, and yielded to a sort of physical and mental *malaise*, which he was ready to impute partly to fatigue, and partly to the fact that he had been amusing himself more than was his custom during the last few days, and this was the reaction. 'I go back to the grind now,' he thought, 'and I will get it over as soon as possible—I can't stand much more of this kind of thing; it doesn't pay. My Helen would be cured of her funny unreasonable notions about the supremacy of my business in my thoughts, her pretty jealousy would vanish like a cloud if she could only see me now, if she could only look into my heart and know how I longed to have done with it all and to get back to her. How I envy the people who are going where she is!'

He was walking slowly, with bent head and a musing manner, rarely seen in the

busy streets of the water-side city, as he thought this, and he mechanically put his hand into his breast-pocket searching for his wife's last letter, which he felt sure he had brought down with him; but it was not there. 'I must have left it in my room,' he thought, and quickened his steps. On reaching the hotel, Mr. Foster went to his room and found the letter, which he glanced over and placed in his pocket-book.

Everything, tide included, had favoured the departure of his friends. It was nigh noon when the ship steamed down the Mersey, and the solitary man, who was in a humour to indulge the sense of solitude, had several hours to dispose of before returning to London. He had contemplated staying one night in Liverpool, but he changed his mind; he would go and have a look at the chief places of interest in the city and its environs, and so dispose of the hours until he could go away.

It was a little after one when he left

the Adelphi, and set out on a sort of strolling tour, and his mind, an active and intelligent one, soon became diverted and interested in the novel scene. There is a good deal to be seen in Liverpool and at Birkenhead, and Mr. Foster gave his mind to seeing it; so that it was much later than he had calculated upon when he was crossing in the ferry from the latter place, and he perceived, with some vexation, that he had overstayed his time, and could not possibly leave by the night train as he had intended. 'Not that it matters,' he thought, 'except that Helen's letter will be waiting for me instead of my being waiting for it.'

'I beg your pardon,' he said, making room on the bench where he was sitting for a man who had stood, with rather an ostentatious air of expecting to have room made for him, just in front of Mr. Foster, 'I didn't see that you wanted a place;' and the man sat down, after some words of course.

He was a slight man, who carried himself awkwardly, with high shoulders and sunken chest and stooping head; he was of dark complexion, had straight black hair, which fitted his head like a thatch, and a black beard, but he was painfully near-sighted, and wore spectacles of such power that his eyes, seen through them, seemed to be buried in cavities altogether disproportionate to the other feature. He was curiously ill-dressed, not only as regards the fabric of his garments, which was incongruous, but also as regards their fit, which had not the slightest reference to either his height or his breadth. They were formed of two or three kinds of cloth of different degrees of coarseness, but all of the cheapest description, and all rusty black, which associates itself in one's mind with the Scripture-reading, amateur-preaching, charity-letter writing, and tract-distributing class. He wore shoes, which might have been made for any one of the pas-

sengers on board the ferry with as much reference to their fit as for him, and his gray cotton gloves were too long in the fingers and too wide in the wrists. In the dog's-eared pocket of his black cloth waistcoat he carried a clumsy silver watch, attached to a frayed piece of black braid; and a shiny leather case, which had evidently been replenished with tracts since he had lavishly distributed his morning supply of that improving order of literature, protruded from the breast-pocket of his shapeless coat.

Mr. Foster glanced at the stranger as one naturally glances at a person to whom one has done a passing civility, and was not far out in his estimate of his social position and professional character; not that he was familiar with the precise type, but the character was too ostentatiously put forward to be mistaken.

A respectable-looking stout woman, with a large basket, which she held tenaciously

upon her knees, to her extreme discomfort, no doubt considering it much too precious to be intrusted to the open space of deck at her feet, got into conversation with Mr. Foster's neighbour, with all the facility accorded by custom to social intercourse with gentlemen of his profession, and after a few minutes Mr. Foster found himself taking an interest in the conversation. It referred to the physical and spiritual needs of the water-side population, and the man spoke in a sensible and straightforward way, quite devoid of cant, which pleased Mr. Foster, and was singularly at variance with his appearance—that of the most conventional theatrical type, which one is almost irresistibly tempted to associate with imposture and hypocrisy.

'I wonder,' said the woman, 'you are not afraid to go down into them dens. What extraordinary sights you must see there!'

'I see a great deal of poverty and

suffering,' said the man, in a marked Irish accent, 'but much less wickedness than people think for.'

And he then proceeded to tell one or two stories of his experience of that day, which had a very real ring about them, and which he related with no affectation, self-seeking, or technical phraseology. Probably he had observed that the gentleman who had made way for him was taking an interest in the conversation, for he shifted his position, in which he had previously had his shoulder turned towards Mr. Foster, for one which placed him straight between his two neighbours, his shoulders against the rail of the bench, and his bent head on his breast. There was occasionally the slightest possible glance of the strange-looking eyes, from under the magnifying spectacles, in the direction of Mr. Foster's attentive and sympathising face.

'May I ask if you have seen much of this sort of thing?' said Mr. Foster, when

the speaker came to a pause, and the kindly woman on his other side was unaffectedly wiping from her eyes tears of compassion evoked by his story of a scene which the narrator had that morning witnessed at a certain 'rookery,' as he called it.

'O yes; my life has passed among such scenes,' said the man.

'Do you get used to them?' asked Mr. Foster.

'In a certain sense, of course I do; as a surgeon gets used to the sight of pain, and a judge to the presence of criminals; but if you mean do I leave off feeling them, do the individual cases become merged in the general, no, certainly not. And, sir,' said the man, now turning decidedly towards Mr. Foster, but propping his arm on his knee, and covering with his hand the end of his nose and the upper lip, already sufficiently hidden by his straight black moustache, which shaded his teeth and mingled with the hair of the beard,

'mine is a life which has its consolations as well as its duties. I see a great deal of misery, vice, sickness, cruelty, and injustice, but I see a great deal of charity too. I am made the channel through which not a little of it flows. Are you familiar with Liverpool?'

'No,' said Mr. Foster; 'I never was here until yesterday, having merely passed through when I came from New York, and I am going back to town to-morrow morning, and should have gone to-night if I hadn't over-stayed my time in sight-seeing, and run myself late for the train.'

'Among the sights you have seen,' said the man with the spectacles, 'had the low quarters of Liverpool and their inhabitants any place?'

'O no,' said Mr. Foster. 'I had not time for anything of that kind—just to get a look at the surface was all I have been able to do; besides, one never sees anything of that sort in reality, I fancy, if one

goes loafing into it as a casual stranger; one must go round with the police to get any real insight into the life of such places.'

'Do you think so?' said the man, in a remonstrating tone. 'Did you ever try to get a look into the lives of the poor and the dangerous classes in the company of their friends, for they have friends, rather than in that of their enemies?'

'No,' said Mr. Foster; 'the idea never occurred to me; indeed, I am sorry to say, I am such a busy man, that I have hardly ever seen anything of that sort, even at home. I am afraid I have been rather remiss,' he continued, with a cordial frankness, which was one of his pleasant peculiarities; 'too easily satisfied with giving a little money now and then, which I can readily spare, and shielding my own feelings from the sight of poverty, which we are all ready to talk about and depute other people to relieve.'

At this point in the conversation the

brief crossing came to an end, and the two men stepped off the ferry-boat together. He whom we may call for convenience the stranger scrupulously assisted the woman and her cumbersome basket—an act of politeness which he accomplished with not a little difficulty, as it appeared he also had a parcel to carry. As the ferry touched the landing-stage, he stooped down and picked up from under the bench, where he had placed it unnoticed by either of his temporary companions, a good-sized package, rather neatly done up in tarpaulin.

Mr. Foster was the first to step off the ferry, and he and the stranger stood for a moment outside, while the latter relinquished her basket to the woman, who took a civil leave of both, and then waited, as if supposing that the sentence addressed to him was incomplete.

'I beg your pardon,' he said, as if expecting Mr. Foster to resume it; 'I thought you asked me a question.'

'I did not,' said Mr. Foster; 'but may I now ask you if your day's work is done?'

The first smile which had appeared upon the face of the stranger crossed it now, but it was instantly controlled, and had been almost imperceptibly brief. 'O dear, no,' he replied, giving the parcel which he had tucked under his arm a significant squeeze; 'I am on an errand to one of the poorest places in all Liverpool — a rookery down near the landing-stage — and I am taking some clothes there which have just been given me for the purpose for a woman and two children, who are lying on old sacks under a piece of old sail-cloth, because the mother has no clothes in which she can go and beg for work. That was not a case in which to wait for to-morrow, so I went and begged the clothes from some people I know at Birkenhead, and I am going down there direct.'

They had walked on a few steps, but

the stranger stood still now, as if expecting —several places branching off here—the gentleman would take leave of him. In that moment of waiting he had an indescribable look of suspicion: the nostrils expanded and closed, the dark complexion paled slightly, and the fingers of one hand clenched themselves. It was only for a second, though; the next Mr. Foster spoke:

'I suppose the place you're going to is quite a representative den?' he said. 'Would you mind taking me with you—I should like to see it, and I should like to help a little through you, who know these poor people? I suppose it isn't very far? But of course it is not, down by the landing-stage. I should hardly have thought there were dens of that kind down there in the region of the great wharves and warehouses.'

'That's just where they swarm,' said the stranger in a bold tone of assertion, 'as you will see' (he stepped out briskly as he spoke).

'I will show you several as we go down to the one my business lies in.'

The night had fallen rapidly; there was no moon, and though the stars were coming out, there was a considerable drift of cloud, so that the sky was gloomy. As the two men walked side by side along the lighted streets, Mr. Foster found himself occasionally outstripping his companion, with whom he was talking familiarly, not exclusively upon topics which had previously engaged them, but with reference to the aspect of Liverpool. On each occasion of the kind he apologised; on the first the stranger complained of a slight lameness, which prevented his keeping up with the alert step of the strange gentleman.

The slowness and the slouchingness of his gait certainly did not decrease during their long walk; their progress was tediously slow; and Mr. Foster would probably have been surprised at the lateness of the hour, had it occurred to him to think about it.

The city was settling down into the silence produced by the general evacuation of its business quarters before that walk commenced. By the time the two turned on Water-street—along the great line of the warehouses past which the sailor who had been Mr. Foster's fellow-traveller from London on the previous day had taken his way the night before—that part of Liverpool was as silent as the City of London at midnight. It presented somewhat of a similar aspect, from a picturesque point of view, of a great centre of wealth and business in isolation and inaction. With this aspect of London Mr. Foster was well acquainted. One of the sights and sensations he had procured for himself some time before was 'the City'—properly so called—when nobody is in it; and Liverpool was now affording him a similar study; but the locality was entirely new, and very shortly Mr. Foster was quite bewildered, and had lost all notion of where he was. Out there

lay the river, on the other side of the town, and the great buildings stretched endlessly under the frowning sky, like a giant wall between him and its life.

They had passed along innumerable immense blocks of building, profoundly still, when they reached one where there was a kind of yard surrounded on three sides with high walls, pierced with many windows. The fore wall forming the front was considerably lower than the other three, and in one corner was a door standing ajar, and kept from closing by a stone; the aperture was very slight, and the probability of any passer-by, previously unacquainted with the locality, perceiving that the door was unfastened was exceedingly small. As the two passed it, Mr. Foster, who was on the inner side, would not have been the least aware of the fact, had not his companion stretched his arm across him and pushed the door wide open.

'This is the rookery,' said the stranger,

having checked Mr. Foster's steps by the movement of his arm, and stopped with suddenness which took him by surprise; 'clean and quiet as it looks outside, it swarms like a London court.'

Mr. Foster stepped back on the pathway for a moment, while his companion crossed the threshold, and expressed some astonishment at no light being visible.

'They are all at the back,' replied the man, as he kicked away the stone and held the door for Mr. Foster to pass through. He did so, and it was shut behind him. 'Follow me,' said the stranger; 'the door into the house is in an opposite corner, and the stairs are dark till you get to the first landing—mind the step.'

Mr. Foster followed him in silence, and they passed through the narrow door into the flagged passage, from which a steep and narrow staircase, with an iron railing, led to a square landing at some height above them. Still there was no light, except a

feeble glimmer emitted from the window above the landing. When they had mounted the staircase so far, and could see each other's faces by the feeble light, Mr. Foster remarked:

'There cannot be any rooks here to-night—there is no cawing.'

It was not, perhaps, any feeling so decided as distrust which lent a peculiar tone to his voice, but it was certainly discomfort.

'I beg your pardon,' said the man; 'I didn't catch what you said,' and he drew quite close to him on the narrow landing, from which a second flight of steep stairs went up.

Mr. Foster repeated the sentence. 'There cannot be any rooks here to-night—there is no cawing;' and had hardly uttered it when the man pushed him into the angle of the wall on which the little ray of light fell obliquely, and stabbed him to the heart! Stabbed him with a hand so sure, with a

thrust so steady, with a blade so keen, with an aim so precise, that he only groaned and sank down dead when the hand which pressed him back, the hilt of the weapon within it, was withdrawn.

Then the murderer, making one cautious step backward, which just withdrew him beyond the reach of the outstretched feet, as the dead man dropped into a heap in the corner, lighted an inch of wax candle which he took from his pocket, and, standing well away from the blood which soaked through the dead man's clothes, welling upwards from the wound, but neither spurting nor dropping, for it was all caught in the folds of the waistcoat and the shirt, stooped over him and closely examined the features, without touching the body. The examination, prolonged until the fixity of death had gripped every feature, and the film of death had covered the wide-open eyes, was perfectly satisfactory.

This ascertained, the murderer, standing

at the full length of his arm from the dead man, slowly and carefully withdrew the weapon, and placing it on his victim's lap, proceeded to search the breast-pocket from which he had seen a note-book peeping out. He found the note-book, and, after a hasty glance at its contents, transferred it, taking care that it received no stain of blood, to his own pocket; but his rifling of the dead stopped there, with one trifling exception. There was a handkerchief in the same pocket with the note-book, marked in initials which did not correspond with Mr. Foster's name; this he took possession of.

There was no hurry, there was no tremor, there was not a moment's uncertainty, there was not an undecided movement throughout the whole of these proceedings. This man and his victim might have been alone in the universe for any trace of haste or fear of detection which he displayed. His face was motionless, his lips were still, there was no hurried breathing, no mut-

tered words, as he minutely inspected his own clothes and hands. His precautions had been eminently successful; there was no stain on either.

The landing was narrow, the space was small, and for his next operation the murderer required a little more room. Mr. Foster had fallen completely in the angle of the wall, and when the body slipped down, the feet projected almost to the top of the lower stair. The murderer took hold of these feet and gently pushed them towards the wall, so as to leave himself more space; he had deposited his bundle on the second step of the upper stair, and he left it undisturbed while he divested himself of every article of clothing except his shirt, and folded them up into a neat roll, corresponding in size with that enclosed in the tarpaulin covering.

This done, he took off his black wig, beard, and moustaches, placed them in the centre of the roll, and proceeded to unpack

the bundle. It contained a suit of sailor's clothes, including a blue shirt, a red wig, and a red beard. These were very carefully constructed, and he assumed them without any difficulty. He then put on the sailor's dress complete, wrapped his white shirt round the clothes he had taken off, and sitting down on the topmost step of the lower stair, with the dead man's feet within a foot of his elbow, sewed up the second bundle in the tarpaulin cover which had enclosed the first, by the aid of a packing-needle and a piece of twine which he took with him ready in his trousers pocket.

This done, he stood up and stood still for two clear minutes, mentally recapitulating the precautions he had just taken, and comparing them with the programme he had arranged. He had omitted nothing, he was quite satisfied; so he put his bundle under his arm, blew out the scrap of candle, and without a glance in the direction in which the dead man lay in a mass rapidly

becoming indistinguishable in the darkness, almost groped his way down the stairs, passed out of the door, crossed the yard noiselessly, and noiselessly pushing back the bolt of the outer gate, emerged from it just as a policeman on his beat had reached the second block of building above it, and was safe not to observe him.

The sailor strolled leisurely down to the landing-stage. If any one had met him, it would have been impossible to mistake his character of houseless, companionless, foreign sailor; but no one did meet him, and a few minutes' keen inspection of the lonely scene satisfied him that the opportunity for the last precaution to be taken with success was there. He advanced to the edge of the stage, and leaning against one of the iron posts which supported the boundary chain, he slowly dropped the parcel with its tarpaulin covering into the river. Even to his impassiveness, to his almost incredible indifference of manner, the finality of this act

seemed to be a relief. He straightened his figure, drew a deep breath, stretched his arms out to their full length, and brought them down by his sides, and after standing for a few minutes, with a straight look-out seawards, he turned away, and keeping the side of the road which borders the landing-stage, avoiding on this occasion the shade of the great warehouses, he took his way towards the tramps' quarters where he had passed the previous night.

On his road he passed a trough provided for the watering of cattle on their way from shipment. A lamp stood near, so that, though the darkness of the night had increased, there was light on that spot. The sailor took his cap off, pulled up the sleeves of his jersey, and pumped a quantity of water over his head and face. This done, he once more inspected the premises, and finding himself perfectly free from any danger of observation, he took off his shoes and examined his feet by the gaslight. It

was as he supposed. There were traces of blood upon them, but it had dried before he had put on his stockings, so that no tell-tale marks had extended to them. He swung himself up on the side of the trough, and carefully washed first one foot, then the other; after which he sat swinging them in the air until they were perfectly dry, when he resumed his shoes and stockings, and again went on his way.

The lodging-house was even more crowded than it had been on the previous night, and the proprietor was more drunk and less accommodating. A couple of dirty sacks on the landing, outside the wretched dormitory, was all that the sailor could procure by way of a bed; and when he asked for a pillow, he was told that he might roll up his clothes, and use them for that purpose—they hadn't got no pillows—advice which was accompanied by a coarse jest at the luxuriousness of his requirements, and which was overheard by one

of the men whose efforts at conversation the sailor had met, on the previous night, with sullen moroseness.

'Pillow,' said this man; 'what do you want with a pillow? Where's that 'ere bundle you were so particular about last night? One would think it was stuffed with diamonds, you was so fond of it.'

'I've been robbed of it,' replied the man, with an oath. 'Worse luck.'

'Well, you weren't robbed of it here,' said the proprietor of the establishment.

'No, that you weren't, Tom Summers,' struck in his neighbour; 'we ain't fine gentlemen here as are above being spoken to, but we're on the square, and pals is safe with us.' With which testimony to the virtues of the company, and protest against the surliness of the new-comer, this gentleman turned on his bed of sacking and went to sleep.

And so the night wore on in Liverpool, and the dawn brightened over the fair ship

with her happy and hopeful company out at sea, and over the stark figure of the dead man who lay with wide-open eyes upon the landing of the great warehouse, where many hurrying feet would shortly be arrested beside him in horror at the fate of the unknown, unclaimed stranger.

CHAPTER III.

HELEN'S JOURNAL.

SITTING down this morning to make a beginning towards the fulfilment of my promise to my husband, I ask myself if I am indeed the same person as I was when he left me. It seems to me that a great gulf lies between me and that time, and that the experience which I have gained of human nature and of the possibilities of life has completely changed me. With all the relief which the absence of Alston's friend has given me there is a great pang of pain for Alston himself, and a horrid sense of a barrier of concealment between us. I have allowed so many days to elapse before I force myself into commencing this self-communing, in sheer uncertainty of what

my line of duty is, and though I am now tolerably clearly convinced that neither now nor ever must I reveal to Alston what has passed, the conviction invests my task of writing to him with great pain and difficulty. Somehow we seem to be doubly parted; first by distance, then by secret. Will this additional sense of parting yield even to his return? How shall I bear to see him take up his relations with Warren just where he dropped them, and to know, as I do know, how his confidence is betrayed? Not in business matters, I daresay; so far as I understand anything about them, there is no likelihood that Alston's interests and Warren's could ever clash, and so far he is safe. It would do my husband such harm in every way to know what has occurred; his own frankness and loyalty of nature could hardly withstand so great a shock; the world would be changed for him. No, he shall never know it; I will trust to the chapter of accidents, or rather,

I should say, to the beneficence of Providence, to preserve us harmless from his false friend.

But my journal, to which he looked forward with such pleasure, and which I determined should be so frank and free and full a record of my life, telling it all out to him in so far as one human heart can break the bar of its solitude in words to another —what has become of that? To keep any freshness and any truth in it at all, I must make this record of what has passed for myself, writing it indeed, but laying it by as a thing that is done with—as a chronicle of the truth for reference, for precisely that which must not be brought into my letters to Alston is that relief for the feelings and the fears which must be hidden from him. What are these fears? How often I ask myself that question, and I never find an answer! The man has gone; not alone has he pledged his word—he could hardly expect me to set much store by that; but he

knows it is for his own interest, for his own safety, for the future preservation of the good relations between him and Alston, which, false as all pretext to friendship is on his part, are, nevertheless, valuable to him, that he should keep his promise to me—that he should remain away; that he should never attempt to see me or to communicate with me while I am alone. A thousand times a day I tell myself this; I strive to feel my freedom; I recall the oppression of his presence; I remember my dislike to him long before I knew the secret unconscious origin it had; and I ask myself why I do not exult, why I am not able to bear with more than composure anything which has led to such an emancipation? But it is not so. The presence of the enemy seems to hem me in, an evil influence is in the air I breathe; no effort frees me from this morbid terror, of which I am half ashamed, while I write this secret record no eyes but my own are ever to see.

How cleverly, how skilfully this man has carried out this sudden and complete change of all his plans; how reasonably he seems to have accounted for leaving New York! No one seems surprised, and I am quite certain not the slightest shade of suspicion that his departure is of any consequence to me has presented itself to the mind of any of our common acquaintance, though the close tie between him and Alston is perfectly well known. It is just this power, this influence over others, which makes me so afraid of him even now. What if on Alston's return he took some other means of alienating him from me! The feminine inferiority, the absence of a power of understanding business matters, will serve him no longer: he won't try to revive that theory when Alston returns; he shall find that I have administered every affair which he left in my charge too well to be set down as an incapable for the future; but he may try a more subtle

means. I believe the love of a man like Warren is half passion, half hatred, and that the hatred swallows up the passion when it is effectually checked. Whence that notion has come to me, I know not, but it has come, and with it a fear of this man's hatred, greater, if possible, than my horror of his love.

There, I have recorded it, and now I will try to turn my mind from it—I will try to write to Alston a cheery letter, a pious fraud.

When you told me, dearest Alston, that my letters were to take the form of a journal, I remember thinking of the passage in our pet book, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, in which Dr. Primrose describes the vicissitudes of primroses' existence, and summoning them up in migrations from the blue bed to the brown. My journal, if I keep it at all within the actual sense of the term, would record nothing more strange or ex-

citing. I migrate from the nursery to the parlour, from the parlour to the park, from the park to the nursery; but my chief sojourn is in the latter place. I never could have imagined that a baby could give one so much to do, even when one is assisted, as I am, by the most capable of nurses, concerning whom I have a lot to tell you presently; neither could I have believed that a baby could be so interesting. We made up our minds, you remember, that we were not going to plague our neighbours, and make fools of ourselves, by advancing the claims of this remarkable infant to be quite the finest, the most intelligent, and the most precocious that ever existed. Bearing this resolution in mind, I endeavoured to be a very rational mother, but I protest, quite genially, that I do not want any society except baby's, until the kind Fates send me that of baby's papa.

The child has become so strong and healthy that I am no longer in the least

uneasy about her; therefore she is a pure unmitigated pleasure to me; and the real truth is that if I am to tell you all about my daily life, I fear you will suffer from the plethora of baby. Of course, I read and work, and visit and receive some people sometimes—not many and not often; and, of course, I get out and do some shopping. I bought the loveliest pelisse, yesterday, that ever was seen out of Paris, and I believe it came from there; and then, again, even shopping has come to mean baby—the pelisse was for her, not for me. I play the piano, sometimes, a little—nurse says baby is beginning to take notice of music. But after all this is not my life, you know; it is only the outside of it, and one shell is very like another.

Of course I miss you frightfully, more and more every day, but I do not feel helpless. I made up my mind, you know, that I never would yield to that helpless feeling, from which I have seen so many women

suffer who are guarded as I am by the care and love and generosity of good men, from every trouble from which one human being can shield another, and so I have kept my promise made to myself. When there is anything to make up my mind about, I make up my mind promptly; when there is anything to do, I do it at once, to the best of my ability; if I make mistakes I don't fret over them, but I think I shall manage them better next time, and I don't get discouraged. I daresay I shall see in the end how very good for me this parting between us proved. Don't suppose I am going back upon what you laughed at me for, and called my jealous susceptibility. I have got over all that, but I really am going to say that you will find me ever so much more useful, ever so much more of a companion; because I shall have had this little interval for exercising my judgment as well as my taste, for exerting my discretion as well as gratifying my fancies. Hitherto,

your indulgence and affection have limited me to the less useful and less strengthening of these processes; so when you come home, dearest Alston, you will have to tell me all about business, and you will find I shall understand it quite as well, and take quite as much pleasure in it, as in our old discussions on books and music and pictures and acting.

Writing that word 'acting' reminds me of our baby's new nurse—rather an inconsequent style of writing this, you will perhaps say, for a woman who is claiming a newly-developed talent for business; but it is what you asked for. Baby's nurse is the oddest woman, and such a treasure! I will tell you how she came to me, and really it is not out of proportion, for it was certainly the most striking event in my life since you left me. She came in answer to my advertisement—she was the first candidate, her name is Bessie Jenkins, her husband is somewhere in the Western States.

They had misfortunes, and were obliged to part for a while, like ourselves. I suppose it was that likeness in unlikeness which attracted me towards the good woman from the first. She spoke with a hearty love and a hearty sorrow of her absent husband and her dead baby, only a day or two dead when she came to me, and I shall never forget her face when she took our little Mary in her arms, and saw how delicate the child was. The very way she said: 'This won't do; you don't understand babies, ma'am;' put aside the food which Jessie and I had been messing up unskilfully; and made some mysterious alterations in the way the child's clothes were put on, made me feel that the right person had been sent to me. Dr. Clark just looked at her and said, 'She will do; make sure of her, Mrs. Griswold;' and I asked her if she could come to me at once—if she could stay that very night; she said she would, and went and fetched her things on the spot.

We are quite friends—we were from the beginning—and she takes almost as much care of me as of little Mary; even that she does cleverly, and has avoided making any jealousy or confusion in the house, which was just what I dreaded, you know, when the doctor told me I must have a nurse. Mrs. Jenkins is a good-looking woman, tall, large, active, with a very fair skin, and fine, honest, gray eyes. She says she does not know exactly how old she is, and I believe her—she looks about five-and-twenty; she is very well spoken for a woman of her class, and not at all ignorant. We have long talks in the nursery and in our drives—for I never go out without nurse and baby; it is so horribly dull to drive out alone; and I find I learn a good deal from her about the realities of life as they exist for women who have not been taken the care of that you have taken of me.

After all, dearest Alston, what a very

little bit of trouble I have known in my life—just those dark days when poor papa's affairs went badly, and you came and brightened them up with that blessed, steady light which has shone on all my pathway since. Why are people's history so different? Is mine to be always an exception? Some time before you left me, and when I was much less thoughtful than I am now, I have occasionally felt afraid that I was too happy; there seemed such deep peace, of such settled certainty, in our lives. I hardly understand all the talk in books and in speech about the turbulence and the transitoriness and the perpetual change which mark human existence all over the world; while your absence has taken away that deep tranquillity, it has not touched, of course, the real happiness of my life. I would not have you think me discontented, and, perhaps, this little shake is good for me—will be good for us both. This is a lesson which Mrs. Jenkins, in her

good, quiet, homely, honest way, impresses on me very often. It does one good to see a person who has had plenty of trouble of a sternly material kind, as well as a great sorrow, bear them with the ready submission and cheerful courage of this poor woman; and many a time when I see her with our baby in her arms and at her breast, where her dead child once lay, I ask myself how I should have faced such a life as hers.

I have said before that we are great friends; she has formed a really strong affection for me—it is like the kind of thing one hears about the Irish people in old times. I fancy she would not shrink from any sacrifice for me. She is extremely curious about you, and never tired of hearing me tell how I came to know you first, and the story of my girlhood; and I talk to her about all these things; so you will have no difficulty in believing that our new nurse is an exceptional person, and

that, though she is homely in speech and manner, there is no real inferiority in her. Don't laugh at me when I say that I am quite sure you and she will be great friends. There is, at least, one very strong bond of union between you: Mrs. Jenkins has a ruling passion — it is for the drama. I found that out very soon.

You know we agreed that the nursery was to be made into a very pretty and cheerful room, so that baby's nurse, if we had the good fortune to find a good one, should be thoroughly comfortable, and feel herself at home. Looking about through the house for such things as I could spare to ornament her domain, on the day after Mrs. Jenkins's arrival, I came upon a lot of photographs in a drawer in the study— they were likenesses of all the actors and actresses whom, I verily believe, you have seen in the whole course of your life. I had no notion you had such a collection; and you need not be frightened, I have not

deprived you of them, I have only taken such as have duplicates—there are a good many. I put them all into the photograph-book which belonged to me when I was a girl, and made it over for nursery use. Who knows how soon Mrs. Jenkins will find out that her wonderful nurseling takes notice of pictures as well as of music? Two or three days after, I asked her if she liked her rooms, if she was quite comfortable, and so forth. She replied, with great delight, that she had never been so comfortable in her life, and expressed peculiar pleasure at finding some pictures about. I found she had been eagerly investigating the contents of the photograph-book, and she surprised me not a little by running glibly over the names of all the portraits. As I hadn't written them in—for one very good reason among others, that I had no notion of who are represented by several of their numbers — I could not understand how she came to know who all these the-

atrical ladies and gentlemen were. It came out then; the theatre is a celestial vision to Mrs. Jenkins; to see a play is the greatest enjoyment of which she is capable.

She says that she knows a good play from a bad one as well as any one in the world, and is a first-rate judge of acting; but she would much rather see a bad play than none at all, which I take as a mark of enthusiasm, if true, that does not justify much faith in her critical faculty. I think she knows every play that has been produced in New York in her time. If she hasn't seen she has read them; she knows all about the 'castes,' as she calls it, is a perfect chronicle of the successes and the failures of the actors and actresses who have come here from London and Paris, and has, among her possessions, a huge scrap-book, of which she is inordinately proud, crammed with newspaper critiques, squibs, old play-bills, and gaudy woodcuts, which represent her prime favourites as it is devoutly to be

hoped they never did appear upon any stage. Mrs. Jenkins is not an American by birth; she was born in Hampshire and reared in London; and though she has been in America since her fifteenth year, she seems to have enjoyed a good deal of her favourite amusement even at that early age. I am, however, positive that she was never employed in any capacity in connection with the stage herself, if only because she speaks of the fact with considerable regret.

One portrait in the photograph-book has so special an attraction for her, that I took it out and put it in a little upright frame, which she keeps on her dressing-table. This slight act of kindness has, it appears, particularly touched her heart; and yesterday, when I mentioned that I should be despatching my letter to you this morning, she begged me to ask you to be sure and go to see the original of this beloved portrait, a certain Miss Clara Mon-

tressor, who is at present playing at one of the London theatres. The theatre in question is called the Thespian; you may perhaps know it, but I am so deplorably ignorant of such matters that I really do not know whether I am talking to you of a first-rate or a fifth-rate establishment. I disguised my ignorance, for Mrs. Jenkins's harmless enthusiasm and true believership amuses me so much that I would not snub her for the world; and when she assured me that she has heard tell that Miss Clara Montressor is quite the finest actress in existence, I did not allow her to perceive that I had never heard Miss Clara Montressor's name. If you can at all conveniently get anywhere near to confirming Mrs. Jenkins's belief, pray do so; at all events, let your reply to this contain an assurance that you have beheld the prodigy. I should not like baby's nurse to be prejudiced against baby's papa by supposing that he could be in London without seeing

Miss Clara Montressor and appreciating the advantage as it deserves.

This young lady is one craze; but Mrs. Jenkins has another, rather an abstract one, for she has never seen its object, who is no less a person than the famous actor, Bryan Duval. She has followed his career with most amusing zeal, and has told me all about his best characters and his peculiar points, until I feel that he too is an old acquaintance. How heartily you would have laughed if you could have been present, unseen, at baby's bedtime yesterday! I had just heard a piece of information which I knew would be productive of unbounded delight to Mrs. Jenkins, and I took that favourable opportunity, when she is always thoroughly disposed for a chat, to tell her about it. She had been rather low all day —she sometimes is, I observe, when she gets a letter from her husband (he is not like you, Alston, though she loves him)— and I knew I should cheer her up by tell-

ing her, what no doubt you know as well as we know it here, that Bryan Duval is coming to New York. You never saw anything so absurd as her delight, which appeared to be thoroughly shared by baby, judging by the kicking and crowing of that young lady in consequence of the additional dangling and tossing which her nurse bestowed upon her in her pleasure. I told her not only that she could go to see him, but that she might accompany me—we can manage to put baby in commission for that little time—and I even hinted at the possibility of her unknown idol presenting himself in the flesh at our house. I suppose you will have made this gentleman's acquaintance in London; do be sure and tell me if so, and whether he is really the very charming man in society which he has the name of being here. Mrs. Sinclair said, in speaking of him to-day, that he was one of the very few great actors whom it did to know off the stage, but that he was thor-

oughly satisfactory. 'So unlike either authors or painters, you know,' added Mrs. Sinclair, in that bored manner of hers; 'they never do, dear, out of print and off canvas; but Bryan Duval is charming!' Charming doesn't mean very much, for every one says it, and everybody means by it something different from what everybody else means. If you say Bryan Duval is 'charming,' I shall know the value of the verdict, and be quite sure that I shall find him so, for of course we shall know him here, whether you have made his acquaintance in London or not. If you have, dear Alston, give him a letter of introduction to me, for I really think I am slightly bitten by the popular enthusiasm, and though I cannot say, like Mrs. Sinclair, that I am 'dying to know him,' it would be very pleasant, and I should at once call upon his wife, of whom I have heard a great deal.

I have nothing particularly interesting to communicate respecting household af-

fairs; everything is going on very well and very quietly. Of course, my dearest Alston, you will expect that this letter should contain some reference to the commission with which you charged Mr. Warren on the day of your departure, and which he immediately fulfilled. Will you pardon me if I make my reference to it a brief one in proportion to its importance and to the large share which I know it has had in your thoughts? Our parting is too new, the sense of its inevitable duration weighs too heavily upon me. I am obliged to set my face too steadfastly to overcome the nervousness, the anxiety, and the loneliness involved in dwelling upon it to admit of my saying all that I feel, or even any part of it, with regard to the contents of the letter which your friend handed to me. If I said all, if I said any, it would come to the same thing—that letter is like you, Alston; it is an absolute fulfilment, a complete realisation of the estimate which I

have formed of you. If by any horrible decree of Fate the occasion should ever arise on which it would be my doom and my duty to act upon the instructions, and to carry out the provisions, contained in that letter, I should do so with a proud and full sense that they are worthy of you, that they are such last words, such last instructions, as, if I could have chosen, I should have asked of you. And now I must pass away from this subject. I am unequal to saying more about it. When I can say what I have felt, with my head on your shoulder and my hand in yours, you will know what the receipt and the reading of that letter was to me. The other commission with which you charged Mr. Warren, I fear, I received in a different spirit—one which made it difficult for me to bow my own will completely to yours, to substitute your judgment unrepiningly for my own. Happily no occasion has yet arisen to oblige me to have recourse to Mr. Warren's advice or

assistance. I have needed neither. All external matters, with which alone he could have any concern, have passed along very smoothly, nor can I, at present, foresee any possible contingency in which it would be necessary for me to apply to him; should any such arise, you may rest assured that I shall strictly conform to your instructions. It was rather hard for me, my dear husband, to be told by that one friend of yours, concerning whom we are not entirely of one opinion, that my letters to you were to pass through his hands. Did I not know that you are quite above such a futile and foolish exercise of power, such experimenting in the pliability of the human will, had we not often discussed the contemptible folly of the patient Griselda, and quite made up our minds as to what we thought of Geraint, I might have supposed for a moment that you had imposed this restriction upon me as a sort of test, as well as a significant hint to me that thus far and no farther I might

go in our domestic relations. I might have thought you meant to say, 'I like Warren, you don't; you will have to give in to my liking.' This would have been a calculation and an act of a domestic tyrant; therefore an impossibility to you. I accept the restriction in a perfectly frank and candid spirit, and absolute loyalty towards you. Some day you will perhaps tell me—when you find that I am capable of being more of a companion to you than I have hitherto been—what is the precise nature of your present business, and the exact character of the complication which has rendered it necessary that my letters should not go direct from your own house in New York to your own address in London; and I have no doubt that I shall entirely recognise the force of the reason. If, however, you should never tell me, if for any reason conceivable or unconceivable by me it should remain impossible for you to confide this to me, I shall be perfectly satisfied that the motive

not to be explained is one which does no discredit to you, and is wholly uninfluenced with any slight to me. And now, dear Alston, I pass from the subject either for ever or until such time as you choose to resume it.

I wonder if you will be provoked with my pertinacity if I tell you that I have discovered that Mr. Warren has very few such partial friends as you are. The fact is, he is not much liked by men, and he is, generally speaking, as much disliked by their wives as he is by me. I think no polish of manner, no external surface, brightness, or gallantry of that kind which, when looked into by a keen-eyed woman, is much more insulting than complimentary, has ever enabled him to conceal from women in general the sentiment which all right-minded women must resent, and which would render neglect, even rudeness, from Mr. Warren, the most acceptable line of treatment he could adopt towards a woman. Mrs. Sinclair was talking of him

yesterday. I did not introduce the subject, and I kept my own opinion to myself. I should regard it as a kind of side wind of disloyalty to you, my dearest, if I allowed anybody but yourself to know the difference that exists between us on that point, to suspect that your friend was not my friend. Mrs. Sinclair spoke of him pretty roundly, and saying a great many things which were untrue, I daresay, she said one in which I believed. It was that Mr. Warren was, in her opinion, an unsafe friend and an exceedingly dangerous enemy. I pray that we may never have him for an enemy! I wish to God, and with a growing earnestness, that we had never had him for a friend!

At this point in my letter, dearest Alston, I was interrupted by a visit, and now I fear that I shall have to finish this up hurriedly in time for the mail. My unexpected visitor was Thornton Carey. He sat with me a long time. I didn't like to

hint to him that his coming was a little imprudent, in one sense, as curtailing my time for writing to you—that, however, I can take up again; in another sense, his visit was exceedingly apropos. You will be delighted to hear how admirably your generous intentions towards him have been realised. Can I ever thank you sufficiently for all you have done for him, indeed for every one dear to me, from my father to the merest acquaintance whom I have ever recommended to your good offices? Thornton looks remarkably well, and so far from complaining of hard work in his new office, he says he hasn't half enough to do; but judging from the account he gave me of his duties, I should say most men would consider they had a tolerably fair share of labour and responsibility in his post of librarian at New Orleans. He has taken to his occupation with enthusiasm; in that respect (only) he reminded me very strongly of Tom Pinch, when he set to work so

vehemently about making a catalogue of his unknown employer's books in the Temple chambers. He seems to have grown fond of the very outside of his charge; and when we were talking of our childish days together, and I reminded him of the awful quarrel we had because he tore the red-and-gold cover of my *Arabian Nights*, he regarded me with the most comical horror, as though I had suddenly dug up and brought to light the corpse of a victim, and produced it in the sight of its murderer, after the fashion of, 'You don't mean to say, Helen,' he said, 'that even in my most cub-like and uncivilised days I ever tore a book?' I laughed as I little thought I should ever laugh during your absence; but I thought we were both very near tears occasionally during our interview, for, of course, we talked of our friendlessness until we respectively found the best of all friends in you. I wonder if Thornton Carey has any chance of being a great man some day

—in his own studious scientific line, I mean? How nice it would be if he did turn into a great man, and it was all your doing—for so it would be! No man could work without tools; you have put his into his hand. Do you know even I had no notion how hopeless he was, how severely he felt the restriction of poverty, and that narrow sphere from which there seemed no chance of escape, until you opened the barrier with the golden key? I suppose I understand most things better now; and though I always felt very much for him, and had a dim notion that he was a case of what I have heard you call 'wasted force,' I have only come to see it clearly since he has been talking to me.

How earnestly I thank you for all your goodness to my old friend! It seems, he says, the most absurd of all possible ideas that he could ever be able to express his feelings otherwise than by, or even by, words. There is small chance that he

should ever be able to prove his gratitude or repay his obligation to you—not that he ever wishes it ever to be repaid; I do believe him to be one of those few noble men who can bear obligation nobly; but should the opportunity ever come, he would snatch at it gladly. He said a great deal to me which I feel I cannot repeat, partly because he would not like it, and partly because you could not bear it. I never met any one who can so ill endure to be thanked as you, my dear Alston. I have seen you carry that sometimes to an almost ungracious extent. So when Thornton meets you he will not try to thank you—he will leave that to me; you will accept the substitute, won't you?

We had one more laugh, he and I, before I had to send him away, in order that I might get time just to finish this. It was over our recollections of the time when we took great delight in the fable of the Lion and the Mouse. He and I differed in opi-

nion in those days—he wanted to be the lion, I preferred being the mouse; we agreed just now that Fate had turned us both into mice, and put the kindest of lions in our way. May God keep him from any net, or any need of nibblers!

Of course I am looking out very anxiously for all sorts of details about your daily life. I should like to know that you are exceedingly comfortable, very well looked after, and enjoying yourself when you are not immersed in business; but I don't think I want to hear that you like London very much, that you find the time flies, and that your quarters are sufficiently snug to prevent your remembering home very constantly, and missing me at every turn. This is not small-minded, is it? And even if it were, you would not care, Alston, for it has nothing to do with my mind, but everything to do with my heart. I do not say, for my own part,

'There is na luck about the house,'

but there is no joy, and there is a constant sense of waiting; nothing seems particularly well worth doing, and my life, comfortable, well-ordered, and not useless as it is, has established itself on a very dead level. I am not going to mope, however, or to be discontented, or anything but cheerful, than what you would have me, until the time comes when the waiting will be over, and I can say, once more,

'His very foot has music in't
As he comes up the stair.'

And now I must shut this up, sealing it with a kiss from baby, and one from your own HELEN.

Helen Griswold sealed her letter, placed it in a large envelope, on which she wrote, with a strange shrinking repugnance, Trenton Warren's New York address, despatched it by a special messenger to his office, and went immediately to her child. A nervous

flurry had come upon her while writing the last lines of her letter, and it was only by a determined struggle with herself that she kept off a passionate fit of crying; but she put it down, and went into the nursery with a calm face. This woman was growing apace. By what mysterious process? She talked cheerfully to Mrs. Jenkins, and taking the baby, who was sleepy, in her arms, rocked it to rest. The monotonous movement had a quieting influence upon herself, and by degrees her cheerfulness was restored.

That night, when Helen Griswold was in her own room, she wrote for a while in the private memorandum-book in which we have already seen her record the circumstances which had given a double current and meaning to her life. Having made a few cursory notes of the main points of her letter to her husband, laying special stress upon the mention of Trenton Warren, she went on to note in her duplicate chronicle

the principal event of the day—this was Thornton Carey's visit.

'I wonder,' she wrote, 'why it is that a pure and unmitigated pleasure, one totally unassociated with any pain, one perfectly free from any drawback, should not avail to crush, at least for a time, the oppressing pain and dread which has been troubling me of late. If I have, as I believe I have, a relentless enemy in Trenton Warren, I have a friend upon whose fidelity I may rely, whose love I can trust with all my heart, and accept with all my conscience, to oppose to him. My friend is a cleverer man than my enemy; he surpasses him by all the distance which makes a gentleman to surpass a man who is not a gentleman; his will is as steadfast; his courage is, or I am much mistaken, far more high; of his devotion to me I have many years' experience; of his devotion to Alston I have the guarantee of a nature large enough and good enough to contain that great virtue,

gratitude; and yet there is no reassurance, there is no consolation, there is no rest for me in all this knowledge. I don't think it would come, if even I should tell Thornton what is in my heart; and that I could not do! I could not bear that he should know that such a profanation had ever overtaken me as the avowal of this man's hideous love; the mere remembrance of it seems to stain my soul, as it troubles my repose; it has gotten into my life like a bad influence. When I awake in the morning, I think not of Alston, but of Warren, and I welcome sleep because it shuts out the hateful remembrance. I must shake this off, or I shall turn the fancied evil into a real one, and give my own fears their worst fulfilment.'

CHAPTER V.

'SCOT FREE.'

On the morning after the murder, so much of the daylight as could force its way through the begrimed glass, or greased paper acting as substitute for absent glass, in the low window of the tramps' home struggled in a shame-faced manner into the den, and faintly revealed the prostrate forms of its inhabitants.

Most of them were still asleep, but by one man there the advent of that streak of light had been long and anxiously looked for. This was the man dressed in sailor's clothes, whose dread proceedings on the previous night have been at length recounted; he who was called Tom Summers

by those lying around him, and whose demand for a pillow, and complaint of the loss of his bundle, had alternately roused their scorn and mirth.

As the first ray penetrated the room, Tom Summers cautiously withdrew the arm which, during the night, he had kept drawn across his face, and looked round him. So far as he could make out, none of his companions were yet awake, and he availed himself of the opportunity to take a small looking-glass from his pocket, and propping it against the wall, he rapidly surveyed himself in it, pulling his red wig further down over his face, and settling the red beard, which had become shifted during the night. No stings of conscience, no terrifying reminiscences of the foul deed which he had committed, disturbed his rest; the strain upon his mental and bodily faculties had been so great that he had slept heavily and soundly, without a dream, without a movement. Even then, as he surveyed

himself in the little pocket glass, he felt his eyelids closing, the elbow on which he leant giving way under him, and he felt more than half inclined to drop down upon his side, and slumber again.

It must not be! He had set himself the task of rousing with daylight, and had fulfilled it, and he had too much to do to permit himself to relapse into slumber; so, after indulging in one luxurious but silent yawn and stretch, he pulled himself together by an effort, and staggered to his feet. One or two of the sleepers in his immediate neighbourhood, roused by the noise he made, cursed him roundly; but beyond this no notice was taken of his proceedings.

Tom Summers stepped quickly down the creaking, rickety staircase, at the bottom of which he found the proprietor's 'deputy'—a shock-headed, blear-eyed old man, who acted as the porter and boots of the establishment; the daylight had not yet penetrated to this part of the house, and the

old man held a flaring tallow candle in his hand, with which he surveyed the sailor.

'O, it's you, Jack, is it?' he said, in a thin piping voice. 'I thought it was some of the coves trying to come the double over me, but you paid your shot last night—I saw you.'

'Yes, yes, I paid last night,' repeated the sailor quickly. 'Open the door, please, and let me out.'

'Why, what's your hurry?' asked the old man, turning towards the hole from which he had just emerged, and looking up at the old Dutch clock which hung against the wall; 'it has only just gone five, and—'

'I've got to join my ship,' said Summers, 'and I must be off at once. Let me out, please.'

The old man unlocked the door, and pulled it open by degrees. As soon as there was space enough for him to pass, Tom Summers slipped by without a word,

and went limping up the court. The old man looked after him with bent brows, muttering in a tone of great disgust: 'That's polite, any way—got to join your ship, have you? I tell you what, my lad, I believe your ship is H.M. gunboat Crimp; and that as soon as you get on board of her, there will be a muster of all hands for punishment parade;' and grumbling thus, he returned to his den, closing the door after him.

Meanwhile Tom Summers, when he once found himself clear of the court, turned his back on the water-side quarters, and made the best of his way towards the Lime-street station. He still walked with an apparently painful limp; he still shuffled along with his shoulder almost rubbing against the wall; he looked like a sailor just recovering from a bad illness, and as such he was compassionated at the Lime-street station by an old woman, who gave him sixpence, and offered him a pull at the black bottle in her wicker basket, telling him, at the

same time, that her son was at sea too, and on the west coast of Africa; worse luck!

It was for the parliamentary train to Chester, which was about to start, that Tom Summers took a third-class ticket; and carefully avoiding the carriage into which he watched his recent benefactress, climbed into an empty compartment, and curling himself up into a corner, scarcely waited for the starting of the train to fall asleep. There was no chance of any particular notice being taken of him, for scarcely a train left Lime-street which did not carry some liberty-men from the great ships in the Mersey going inland for a few days' furlough. There was no chance of his being carried beyond his destination, for he had purposely selected a carriage which did not go farther than Chester; he could enjoy the luxury of a long silent sleep, and he did. Once he started forward and groaned, but on waking suddenly he could recollect nothing more than that he had been striking

at something which disappeared beneath his blow; and once more he put his feet upon the seat, and went to sleep again.

By the time the slow-going train, which stopped at every station to pick up and let out crowds of men and women, carrying baskets of country produce, arrived at the Chester station, Tom Summers was thoroughly rested. He stepped blithely out of the carriage, exchanged a pleasant good-morning with the guard, and made straight for the newspaper stall on which the bundle of Liverpool papers, only arriving in time at Lime-street to be thrown into the van, were then being unpacked. He bought a copy of each morning journal, and seating himself on a neighbouring bench, turned one after the other inside out, and rapidly ran his eye over their contents. Twice he passed the morning journals thus in review before him, occasionally starting as his eye caught certain paragraphs with sensation headings, but reading rapidly on until he

had perused the batch. Then, with a sigh of relief, he rose and made his way to the cloak-room. To the porter who was in attendance there in the absence of the general functionary, not yet arrived, Tom Summers handed a printed ticket, immediately receiving for it in exchange a small black bag.

'Here is your kit, Jack,' remarked the porter, handing it to him.

'My skipper's, not mine,' said Tom Summers; 'it's too fine for the likes of me;' words which had a hidden humour apparently altogether too much for the porter, who kept bursting into loud guffaws of laughter long after Tom Summers had left him.

With the small bag swinging upon his hand, Tom Summers walked past the Queen's Hotel, and down the broad road, yet unbuilt on, leading to the town. On one spot a temporary wooden circus had been erected, and he stopped to read the bills of the performance hanging at the door. Then he

lounged along again; but as soon as he came within the precincts of the town, he turned in between two of the old houses up a passage, at the end of which was a flight of stone steps leading to the ancient city walls. These he ascended, and when he found himself on the walls, he hesitated as though in doubt which way to turn.

Beneath him lay the old city, its quaintly fantastic gabled roofs, its cathedral tower, its numerous church spires, and its hundred relics of mediæval architecture glowing in the early morning sun. Beyond were to be seen the broad silver windings of the Dee, the velvet-turfed racecourse, just outlined by its white posts and rails, and far away in the distance, heaving up their broad shoulders out of the blue haze, the majestic range of the Welsh mountains.

That was the side to which Tom Summers inclined; he sought the country, not the city; and turning sharply to his right, he made a half circuit of the wall, and de-

scended in a by-lane which gave right upon the racecourse.

Once only did he pause in his work, and that was when his steps took him in front of the county gaol, a full view of which is commanded from the walls; a prison omnibus drew up at the huge outer gate, and from it some half-dozen prisoners descended, heavily handcuffed, and were marched into the gaol-yard between a file of warders. Tom Summers surveyed this little ceremony with great interest, leaning over the top of the crumbling wall, and shading his eyes from the sun with his hands. When the great gates clanged behind them, an expression, half of pity, half of contempt, crossed his face, and after he had muttered: 'Poor devils,' he speedily added: 'Stupid fools,' then he shrugged his shoulders and went on his way.

When Tom Summers found himself on the flat bare expanse of the racecourse, he seemed considerably disappointed, and looked

round with dismay at the abandoned prospect before him. On one side lay the river, but that seemed to offer him no consolation; on the other, the town, but on that he had already turned his back. At length, after a careful survey, he saw at about the distance of half a mile, on a rising ground, a little thicket, not much more indeed than a largish clump of trees, and towards that he at once bent his way. The sun by this time had attained considerable height, and more than considerable strength; and when the wayfarer had skirted the racecourse, and toiled across the intervening fields, and up a wooded knoll, he was tired and hot. The outermost edge of shade did not, however, content him. He paused there and looked round to note the farmer's wain, a dot upon the distant turnpike road; the lark singing in high heaven above his head; the man and boy at plough-work three fields off, the one intent on his furrow, the other on his team. And then, having satisfied

himself that such human beings as he had seen were unobservant of his actions, and that there were none others within range, he plunged deeper into the little wood, and opening the bag which he carried with a key, drew from it a plain gray suit of morning dress and a soft-felt wideawake.

In less time almost than it takes to write, he had divested himself of his sailor's clothes, and of the red wig and beard, all of which he thrust into the bag; then dressing himself in the gray suit, and donning the wideawake, he took the bag in his hand, and left the little wood on the opposite side to that on which he had entered it.

The clerk in the cloak-room at the Lime-street station that afternoon was more than usually busy, and consequently more than usually short-tempered. He was ticking off an enormous number of entries in the way-bill, and was well down the third column, when he heard a soft voice from the sliding window, which was open, say:

'I beg your pardon.'

'Seven hundred and twenty-three, barrel of oysters marked X. O.,' muttered the clerk to himself, giving no heed to the interruption. 'Seven hundred and twenty-four, crate of live fowls; seven—'

'I beg your pardon,' said the voice again, and the clerk looked up and found that it belonged to a slim gentleman in a pale gray suit, and with a soft black-felt hat on his head, and carrying a small bag in his hand. 'Two days ago I came by the noon express from Euston,' said the gentleman, 'and booked my portmanteau to Liverpool; but being taken ill, I was compelled to get out at Edge-hill, and so my luggage came on without me. A brown portmanteau, bearing the name of Dunn—shall I have the good luck to find it here?'

'If it is here you will, sir,' growled the clerk, dying to get back to the way-bill. 'Two days ago, you say; brown portmanteau, name of Dunn? Here you are.'

'I am very much obliged to you, indeed,' said the gentleman.

'Going by cab or train, sir?' said the clerk shortly.

'By cab, if you please, to—'

'Here, Jim,' called the clerk to a passing porter, 'put this portmanteau on a cab for the gentleman. Parson out for a holiday, I should think,' he said, muttering to himself, looking after the passenger, who was following his luggage; 'they always try to get out of uniform, but are frightened to get into anything louder than gray.'

Mr. Dunn saw his portmanteau placed upon the cab, and, giving the porter sixpence, bade him tell the driver to go to the Adelphi Hotel. He looked hard at the porter's face while he spoke to him, as he had looked from under his overhanging brow at the clerk in the cloak-room, as he looked at the cabman when, after taking a note of the number of the vehicle, he descended in front of the Adelphi.

As he advanced quickly to the glass case in which are enshrined the presiding goddesses of the establishment, he was struck with a sudden chill; he shivered violently and shrugged his shoulders, and rubbed his hands together as he stood asking whether he could be accommodated with two rooms—a sitting-room and bedroom—leading out of one another.

'Certainly, sir,' was the gracious reply. 'Show ten and eleven, Charles. You seem to be very cold, sir?'

'I have taken a chill, I think,' said Mr. Dunn, pausing at the bottom of the stairs and looking round. 'I come from a climate where frost and east winds are unknown, and if I mistake not, there is a fine specimen of the latter raging through your streets just now.'

'Beg your pardon, sir, wind's south-west,' said Sam, the porter, who was standing by.

'Well, whatever it is, it seems to have

penetrated right through me,' said Mr. Dunn, shivering again, 'and I must ask for a good fire in my sitting-room. What's this?' He was proceeding up the stairs, but paused again as two policemen, followed by a small mob, which remained outside, entered the house, and approached the glazed sanctum.

'Beg your pardon, miss,' said one of them, who wore the blue-braided frock of an inspector, touching his hat, 'but we have come to make some inquiries. The body of a gentleman, evidently a case of murder, has been discovered, and it is recognised by a cabman as that of a fare whom he drove from this hotel to the docks, and who is supposed to have been a visitor here.'

'O my, how dreadful!' says the young lady in the glass shrine. 'Perhaps you had better see the manager, inspector; just step in here, if you please.'

She rang a bell, and Sam and the waiter

and the traveller, who had all suspended their proceedings, now walked up-stairs, the former bearing the portmanteau, and the latter muttering:

'Murder! body! What an unpleasant affair!' Then calling back, said: 'Please don't forget to send a chambermaid to light the fire at once.'

When the porter had placed the portmanteau in the bedroom, and he and the waiter had retired, Mr. Dunn threw himself into an easy-chair, and with his arms folded and his legs crossed, fell into a reverie, which lasted until he was aroused by a knock at the door. He did not call out 'Come in' until he had retired to his bedroom, half closing after him the door of communication, and through the crack watched the operation of lighting the fire by the kneeling chambermaid.

When the girl had retired, Mr. Dunn emerged from the bedroom, and made straight for the window. A great breadth

of street between the hotel and the opposite houses; no chance of his being overlooked. He walked quietly to the door, turned the key, and settled it so in the lock as to prevent his being spied upon from the outside; then, with soft quick steps, entered the bedroom and immediately came out again, bringing with him the hand-bag which he himself carried up the stairs.

A momentary hesitation now, and a stealthy and sharp look round; the next minute the bag is open, and Mr. Dunn has taken from it and laid upon the table the sailor's dress which Tom Summers wore in the low tavern and the tramps' lodging-house, and at the same time has produced from his breast-pocket a long shiny pair of scissors. With these he makes short work of the sailor's suit, tearing and ripping it into strips, and cutting these strips into smaller pieces, which he gathers together in a heap in the middle of the table.

Then Mr. Dunn, returning to the bed-

room, unlocks the portmanteau which he had received from the cloak-room at Lime-street, lays out his dressing materials on the table and some clothes on a chair, takes a Bradshaw and a Tourist's Guide to Ireland with him into the sitting-room, and then, with a sudden effort, gathers the whole heap of cut and tattered clothing in his arms, and throws it on to the fire, which by this time is blazing brightly. Some of the little bits of blue cloth take fire at once, and go eddying up the chimney—others smoulder slowly; but Mr. Dunn stands in front of the fireplace, gazing at the grate, now and then patting and forming its contents with the shovel, until no fragment of the clothes remains visible—only white dust and charred ashes. Then he throws back his shoulders and stretches out his arms like one rid of an intolerable burden, and heaves a great sigh of relief.

Quick now, for the burning cloth has left a pungent, titillating, acrid smell, which

must be attended to immediately. Mr. Dunn draws an easy-chair to the corner of the table close by the fireplace, and rumples the antimacassar, which has been laid on by careful hands; then takes the Tourist's Guide, places it on the table in close proximity to the chair, opens it, and places his gold pencil-case between the leaves; lastly, he takes a shovelful of red-hot coals from the grate, and deliberately strews them over the hearthrug; then he quietly quits the room, leaving the door open behind him.

Meanwhile, Inspector Jeffery and his subordinate, Sergeant Scott, were enjoying themselves after their fashion. They had a great triumph of popular excitement and curiosity up to the doors of the hotel, and once inside, they were destined to still greater distinction, not, indeed, at the hands of the young lady in the glass case —she was too much in the habit of seeing celebrities of all kinds, military and naval

heroes, leading lawyers, great authors and actors, all of whom were in the habit of putting up at the Adelphi, and addressing polite nothings to her, to be particularly moved at the entrance of a couple of policemen, even though engaged in investigating a murder mystery. When she had turned them over to the manager, her business with them was concluded, and she went back to her ledger and to answering the numerous applicants at the glass case, without bestowing another thought upon the visitors in blue-braided uniform. But the gentleman who at that time filled the position of manager was a very different kind of person; he delighted in the mysterious and romantic, and the word 'murder' sounded pleasantly in his ear. The police officers were invited into his private sanctum, were bidden to take seats, and were asked what beverage would be most agreeable to them. The inspector, a man of travel and of taste, suggested dry sherry;

the sergeant, a pure and simple Liverpudlian, would have liked to have named gin, but he recollected where he was, and asked for brandy.

'And now,' said the manager, as soon as the visitors were comfortably seated, with their glasses before them, 'now, inspector, tell us all about it.'

'There isn't much to tell, sir,' said Inspector Jeffery, 'though it is as bold and, I may say, as clean a job as I have met with in my experience.'

'And you mean to say the murdered man was a visitor in this hotel?' interrupted the manager. 'Who could it be?'

'I'm coming to that presently, sir,' said the inspector, who always delivered himself according to what he called 'the laws of evidence,' and who was terribly put out by having his straight story broken in upon. 'I said it was a bold and clean job, and I might have added clever, for although there was a patrol passing up and down in

front of the very door of the warehouse where it was committed every half hour, to say nothing of sergeants visiting rounds and all that, not a trace was seen or heard of anything about it until the people came to the warehouse this morning.'

'Warehouse! How did he get in there? It must have been done by one of the warehouse hands,' again interrupted the manager.

'When you have done, sir, I will continue,' said the inspector testily. 'It was one of those large warehouses close by Water-street, which are let in floors, or flats as they call them in Scotland; each lock up separate to themselves, with a common stairway, and where, there being no porter resident on the place, the front door is always kept unfastened. I have spoken to the commissioners about that once or twice, suggesting an order should be issued to have some one responsible for those doors being locked, and if that had been the case

there would have been no murder. It was an out-door clerk belonging to Triggs and Vyner, wool-staplers, on the third floor, that discovered the murder. He came about seven o'clock this morning, having forgotten his note-book last night, and being unable to start his rounds without it. When he got up to the first-floor landing, he found the dead man lying in a heap in the corner. He thought he was drunk at first—not a tramp, he could not have been that by his clothes, but some gentleman who had been dining out and mistaken his road home—but when he bent over him he found that the man was dead. There was very little blood on the floor, though his clothes were soaked with it. He had been stabbed to the heart with a long-bladed knife, more like a dagger, which was lying by his side. Such a stab, so straight and sure, I never saw before in my experience, nor our divisional surgeon neither. He says, if it weren't for reflecting upon the credit of the

profession, he could almost swear it had not been done by any amateur.'

'Good Lord!' said the manager, by this time intensely interested. 'Well, what then?'

'Then, I was sent for,' resumed the inspector, 'and I came down, and by this time there was a crowd round the place, and my men had some difficulty in turning them out. Two or three of them I allowed to stop, and among them was old Tom Langman the flyman, who whispered to me that he recognised the body as that of the gentleman he had driven from this house to the docks, and who, he thought, was one of a large theatrical party now staying here.'

'Not now,' cried the manager, 'they're gone; went away yesterday in the Cuba. Why, good heavens, it must be number fourteen! He was to have gone back to London last night, but Miss Jennings told me he had changed his mind, and though he

was not at home his things were still in his room.'

'Better send and see if they are there now,' said the inspector. 'What was the gentleman's name?'

'I cannot say,' said the manager. 'You see I was so taken up with listening to Duval, and looking at Miss Montressor, and laughing at that funny fellow in the check suit, that I didn't take much notice of the others. I will call somebody to go up to fourteen, and— I beg your pardon, sir,' he exclaimed to the gentleman whom he found on the other side of the door just as he opened it, 'did you wish for anything?'

'Not at all,' said the gentleman in a soft voice. 'I am Mr. Dunn, a visitor at this house occupying number ten, and I heard something as I was passing the bar about some murder which had been discovered.'

'Yes, indeed, sir, a dreadful murder of a poor gentleman who was staying here,

and who seems to have been decoyed into some out-of-the-way place and stabbed to the heart.'

'Indeed,' said Mr. Dunn, 'decoyed into an out-of-the-way place? Ah, probably some woman in it, I should imagine.'

'That's a very good notion, sir,' said the manager, 'very good indeed; the inspector of police is in this room, sir; perhaps you would just step in and mention it. Inspector, here is a gentleman staying in the house who has got what I consider a very excellent idea about the murder.'

'O indeed, sir,' said the inspector gruffly. He greatly disapproved of amateur suggestions.

'Not at all a great idea, inspector,' said Mr. Dunn softly; 'our friend here is pleased to speak too highly of it—merely a notion which has occurred to me, and I have no doubt has previously occurred to you, that a— I beg your pardon,' said Mr. Dunn, stopping short and sniffing through

his nose, 'isn't there a very peculiar smell?'

The manager, the inspector, and the sergeant all sniffed in concert; the two latter never smelt anything, but the manager called out at once, 'Something burning.'

'So I thought,' said Mr. Dunn; 'something woollen.'

'We must see to this at once,' cried the manager, and rushed out.

The others rushed with him, and after a prolonged amount of sniffing made their way up the stairs leading to number ten. As they advanced the smell grew stronger, and they came upon a vast quantity of smoke, which they soon found proceeded from number ten itself, where the atmosphere was so dense that it was impossible to see across the room. There was no trace of any flame, but when the windows had been thrown open it was discovered that the hearth-rug and a portion of the carpet around it were smouldering slowly, and

were nearly consumed. Bells were rung and water was brought, though long before it arrived the inspector and the sergeant had removed any further cause for fear by stamping out the fire with their heavy boots.

The manager was very cross; he did not quite see how he could explain the matter at the next meeting of the directors, and ask for a new carpet. He had intended to show his temper to Mr. Dunn, but that gentleman he saw was far too savage himself to brook being spoken to.

'It is most annoying,' said Mr. Dunn. 'I am only here for a day on my way to Ireland and this accident occurs. The silly woman who lit the fire did not bring a guard for it. I am unused to fires; I live in a warm climate; but some friends of mine told me never to sit by a fire in England unless it had a guard on it. I looked for a guard before I left the room, but could not find one, and I thought it would be all right.'

The manager was full of apologies.

'Should they move Mr. Dunn to another suite of rooms? They could do so at once.'

'No, thank you,' said Mr. Dunn in reply. 'It is unfortunate, but still it is an accident, and could not have been prevented. I will sleep in the bedroom to-night, and I should not have used the sitting-room much, as I am a stranger in Liverpool, and I want to see all that is to be seen on this the only day I have. In the mean time, I shall be thankful if you will prepare me a little dinner, some fish and a chop, in the coffee-room, and I will come down to it as soon as I have washed my hands and face, which seem to be tolerably blackened by the smoke.'

When the manager and the servants had taken their departure—the inspector and sergeant had gone long since—Mr. Dunn retired to his bedroom, and, after turning the key in the door, took off his

coat and waistcoat, and seated himself on the edge of the bed.

'So far so good,' he soliloquised; 'so far everything that I have done has been perfectly successful. My personal identity ceased on my leaving America, and no one can have found any traces of Mr. Dolby, the cynical millionaire, in Tom Summers, the sailor, or Mr. Dunn, the soft-spoken tourist. One night more and I shake the dust of this land from my feet, and can fairly consider myself scot free. That was a lucky idea of mine to strew those cinders on the hearth-rug; the smell of Tom Summers' smouldering rags might have awakened the keen suspicions of those police gentry down-stairs. That flannel shirt was beginning to smoke confoundedly before I left the room, but that is now all provided for; the police themselves were the first persons to see what had occurred, and helped to extinguish the smouldering carpet. Not one precaution has been omitted,

and, distrustful of myself as I generally am, I begin to look with pride upon my powers of organisation as exhibited in this matter. If my orders have only been implicitly obeyed in America, all I could have looked for is accomplished. One more night of acting and character-playing, and I can rest in peace, and return to reap the reward of all I have gone through.'

Then Mr. Dunn rose from the edge of the bed, carefully washed his face and hands, put on the gray coat and waistcoat, and, looking wonderfully simple and respectable, went down to dinner.

The dinner was ready, and as soon as he heard that his visitor was seated, the manager was in attendance to give special directions to the waiter, and to exhibit the utmost consideration for one who had been the victim of such an untoward accident. When Mr. Dunn had finished his fish, the manager ventured to attempt a little confidential conversation.

'That unfortunate fire, sir,' said he, 'prevented us hearing more about the murder from the police. It is a very, very sad affair. I have been with the inspector since I saw you, and though we are not going to view the body until to-morrow, I have no doubt that the unfortunate gentleman was a Mr. Foster, an American gentleman of great wealth who had been staying in this house, and who occupied the very rooms adjoining yours, where his things still remain.'

'An American was he?' asked Mr. Dunn.

'Yes, sir, American,' replied the manager; 'very rich, and with an enormous fancy for theatricals. Beg your pardon, sir; not very much in your line, I should say; but Mr. Foster was very fond of them indeed. He came down here with the celebrated Bryan Duval, of whom you may have heard, and a party of performers who were going across to America. Mr. Foster

left this house to see them off, and after that we never set eyes upon him.'

'That's a strange thing for an inhabitant of such a town as Liverpool to confess,' said Mr. Dunn. 'We in the colonies speak of the mother country as the home of the rarest civilisation. What with your gas and your much-vaunted police arrangement, we are apt to boast of the safety of your streets, of the enormous difference between the state of things in which law and order prevail and where they are governed by a reckless rabble, such as is sometimes found amongst us; and yet here is a most wonderfully cool and audacious murder committed in the heart of the second city of the empire, and not discovered for a certain number of hours afterwards. By the way, is there no trace of the wretch who committed the crime?'

'No, sir, not yet; though I don't know what evidence Inspector Jeffery may bring forward at the inquest to-morrow morning.

Perhaps you would like to be present at the inquest, sir? I am sure I should be able to get a place for you.'

'You are very good,' said Mr. Dunn, 'and I should much like to be present at the scene, as a study of law, of character, and society; but my time to return to Jamaica is drawing nigh, and I must get through the rest of my British visits as soon as I can. The direct steamer for Belfast leaves to-morrow morning?'

The manager replied in the affirmative.

'Then I will go by it,' said Mr. Dunn. 'I have heard much of the beauties of Ireland, and I wish to see them before I return. Now I think I will make my way to bed, for I have had a fatiguing day. I wish you good-night.'

The manager bowed his acknowledgment of his politeness, and Mr. Dunn retired.

As, about noon next day, Mr. Dunn

was proceeding to the cab which was to convey him to the dock, he saw in the hall of the hotel the presiding goddess in the glass case, and the chambermaid, gallantly escorted by Inspector Jeffery, one of the waiters, and the porter.

'The witnesses, sir,' whispered the manager, pointing to them. 'The body has been removed to the dead-house, the inquest is just over, and the jury found a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.'

'Unknown!' echoed Mr. Dunn. 'Then there is no trace of the murderer?'

'Not at present, sir,' said the manager. 'Inspector Jeffery had nothing to bring forward. I wish you good-morning, sir.'

'Good-morning,' said Mr. Dunn, descending the steps.

Then, as the cab drove off, he opened his shoulders, took a long respiration, and muttered between his teeth, 'At last! Scot free!'

CHAPTER V.

A BLAZE OF TRIUMPH.

THE voyage on board the Cuba was by no means the dreadful experience which Miss Montressor had been led to believe; in fact, when they were twenty-four hours clear of the coast of Ireland—where it was, as usual, very wet and inclement, the weather always, apparently, endeavouring to spoil the pleasure prepared by the hospitable inhabitants for their visitors — she roused up and enjoyed herself very much. At first the mere idea of food upset her, and she declared that the constant round of meals was 'disgusting;' but it was soon observed that 'when refection bell did call,' Miss Montressor was one of the first persons to smilingly take up her position at the board, and one of the last to leave

it. It was a part of Mr. Bryan Duval's policy that everything should be done in the most liberal manner, and there was consequently abundance of wine and of very excellent quality, on the merits and demerits of which Mr. Duval would descant to the admiration of the company.

This was not the only point on which that eminent artist won renown. He expounded his views on certain questions of seamanship to the captain with such a wealth of professional phraseology that the worthy officer, who was not in the habit of consorting much with his theatrical passengers, looked upon him with especial favour, asked him constantly into his deck-house, and ventilated at length—almost, as Byran thought, at too great length—his original theories concerning currents and wind storms. When, moreover, Mr. Duval had corrected the third officer, who was a Yorkshireman, about the exact position of a tobacconist's shop in Boar-lane, Leeds,

and had demonstrated that a Scotch professor of St. Andrew's University, who was looked upon as a miracle of learning, was little better than an idiot, he was generally allowed to be a man of universal genius, and respected accordingly. As for the officers of the ship, they took the greatest fancy to him. He was unanimously elected an honorary member of their mess, and the deliciously titillating and highly-spiced dishes which, at a late hour of the night, he prepared in the purser's cabin, the effervescent cooling drinks which he manufactured to go with them, and the romantic little Spanish love songs which he sung afterwards to the accompaniment of a guitar, formed the theme of conversation for many a future voyage.

Mr. Skrymshire, the low comedian, who had been seen in the exercise of his profession by several of the passengers, both in London and Liverpool, and from whom a fund of amusement was expected, did

not quite come up to popular anticipation, as he passed the principal part of the voyage moaning in his berth in the agonies of illness, and requesting, as a personal favour, that he might be thrown overboard. It was not until the ship had passed Sandy Hook that he put in an appearance on deck; and she was safe at anchor in the quarantine ground—where, in consequence of her late arrival, she was compelled to remain during the night—before he cracked his first joke.

All the party were up on deck very early the next morning, looking with admiring eyes at the beauties of Staten Island, and with wonder at the steamers and ferry-boats darting in and out. Acting upon the private hint given to her by Bryan Duval the night before, Miss Montressor had paid a little special attention to her toilette, and looked very pretty and fascinating.

'Quite right, my dear,' said Bryan,

when he saw her—he himself was arrayed in a high hat with a curly brim, blue body coat, gray trousers, and jean boots with patent leather tips—'quite right, my dear; they go in immensely for this sort of thing here, and you will find that we shall have a few of the press fellows on board before we land, and no end of them waiting at the wharf. First impressions are everything, and half a column in the *Scarifier*, a personal paragraph in the *Growler*, and a sub-leader in the *Democrat* to-morrow morning, will do us good service with our first night's audience; besides, Van Buren is a man who fancies himself a lady-killer, and I want him to be impressed.'

'And won't you be at all jealous?' asked Miss Montressor, looking up coquettishly.

'I jealous?' cried Bryan. 'Of course; stark, staring, raving crazy with jealousy. I'd push those side curls a little further back, my dear, if I were you; and just let me tighten that pin at the back of your

collar. That will do nicely. Have you seen anything of Skrymshire?'

'The last time he appeared he was looking very melancholy and disconsolate,' said Miss Montressor.

'It is most important that Van Buren should not see him until he is in better feather,' said Bryan. 'There will be some champagne cocktail going on when these press fellows come on board, and I will take care that Skrymshire has a dose of that to pick him up. A low comedian with a horse's head and that suit of clothes is enough to frighten any manager out of an engagement.'

Mr. Duval's predictions were fulfilled. The health officer had scarcely rowed off after his interview with the doctor when another boat was seen approaching the vessel, containing certain members of the press, who quickly appeared on board and were conducted to Mr. Duval, by whom they were received with great courtesy.

His ability and geniality had made him a general favourite during his last visit to America, and his return, bringing out a company of whom—notably of Miss Montressor — great things were expected, was hailed with delight. The literary gentlemen, who had a general air of having been up all night, and not having thought it worth while to devote much attention to their toilets in the morning, were conducted to the cabin, where champagne cocktails and other exhilarating drinks were provided for them by Mr. Duval, who, when the liquor had well circulated, despatched a trusty emissary to conduct Miss Montressor to their presence.

In her fresh morning toilette, with her pleasant smiles and frank ingenuous manner, the London actress took by storm the susceptible hearts of the literary gentlemen. They had come with the express intention of interviewing her, and, lo and behold, the most they could do was to utter little com-

pliments and flattery, while most of their time was occupied in staring at her. But Mr. Duval, who knew exactly what was wanted, was not going to let slip such a golden opportunity, and went about from one to the other, answering such questions as he thought might have been propounded.

'What should I say her height was? About five feet five, I should think—a little taller, perhaps, with those new French heels, which set the foot off, but are deuced dangerous for walking. Ah, Willie Webster, you rascal,' whispering in the ear of a dirty little man in a wideawake, 'you're the lad for the ladies, and you're death on complexions, I know. Look at hers; look at the Montressor's. That's the real thing—none of your bismuth and pearl powder, but with the warm tinge on it which she has caught on her voyage from the sea and sun. Natural daughter of a most distinguished man, my dear Carter; blue blood, Norman descent, and all that sort of thing

—look at it in her hands and feet, that's where the real breeding comes out. You don't care about noble descent in this country, I know—honesty, virtue, simple citizen, and all that kind of thing; but you do admire hands and feet, and most of your ladies have them in perfection.'

The press gentlemen went off in their swift-sailing little boat, and landing before the huge steamer worked her way to the wharf, so aroused the enthusiasm of those waiting there by their description of Miss Montressor's charms, that when she was seen on the deck, leaning on Bryan Duval's arm, she was greeted with great applause, cheerings, and waving of handkerchiefs. Most interested among those assembled on the wharf to meet the voyagers was Mr. Van Buren, a strikingly handsome man of between forty and fifty, with jet-black hair in crisp waves over his well-shaped head, a classic profile, and an excellent figure. He was naturally nervous, for the good old

British comedies, which were the staple attraction at Van Buren's Varieties, had ceased to attract, and the manager was looking to the engagement of Duval's company to recoup him his losses, and finish his season brilliantly. Dogging his heels was his friend and adviser Mr. Morris Jacobs, who had entered the service of Mr. Van Buren's father as call-boy at three dollars a week, but who was now reputed to be worth half a million, and to be the real owner of Van Buren's Varieties and almost of Van Buren himself, for the manager-actor was fond of pleasure, and was besides a great sportsman. He had always horses in training somewhere, and whenever he could get away from the theatre he was rushing off to look after them; while Mr. Morris Jacobs had but one thought in life, the accumulation of money; and finding that could be best attended to at the Varieties, there he remained, and there, morning, noon, and night, he was to be found. But when Mr.

Van Buren had been presented to Miss Montressor by Bryan Duval all his nervousness vanished. He bowed his curly head over her daintily gloved hand, and lifted it to his lips. Then turning to Mr. Jacobs, he muttered,

'No use shinning about any more, Morris; trump card's found!'

More and more delights were there in store for the newly-arrived troupe: banquets in their rooms at the Fifth-avenue Hotel, bushels of cards left by distinguished callers, artistic clubs proffering receptions, and invitations for all kinds of entertainments. Miss Montressor was in the highest state of delight. 'If this is America,' she said to Bryan Duval, 'I rather think I am likely to be pleased with it.'

Intelligence of the arrival of the star company, and their brilliant reception in New York, speedily reached Mrs. Griswold's house. Helen, with her usual cordial kindness, sent the newspaper which contained

the lengthiest and most sensational account of the proceedings of the popular reception, and the programme of the performance, to Mrs. Jenkins. She would have gone to the nursery to read it all for her, and enjoy the pleasure and excitement with which she felt the nurse would peruse it, but she happened just then to be detained by callers.

Mrs. Jenkins clutched the paper from the hand of the servant who brought it to her, and read it with the utmost avidity. When, shortly afterwards, Mrs. Griswold went up-stairs to pay her customary visit to the baby before dressing for lunch, she found the nurse in rather a fidgety state; she was absent while Mrs. Griswold talked to her, she answered one or two of her questions at random, and altogether her manner was so *distrait* that Helen resolved to find out what it all meant.

'Has anything happened to you?' she said; 'have you had any bad news? Pray tell me.'

'No, ma'am,' said Mrs. Jenkins, 'I have not had any bad news, but I should like very much to go out for a while; there is some one come to New York that I know, and I should like to call and see her.'

Perhaps a transitory feeling of surprise crossed Helen's mind at the unusual reticence of Mrs. Jenkins, who by this time had become so familiarised with her friendly manner and her kindly genial interest in all that concerned the dwellers in her house that she would have supposed the nurse would at once have told her who the person was, and all about it; but Helen's kindness was not of the exacting sort, and she received this brief communication with her usual sweet compliance.

'Of course you can go out,' she said. 'I will take care of baby; I can take you in the carriage wherever you want to go, and then you can leave baby with me.'

'No, thank you,' answered Mrs. Jenkins, with some embarrassment and a rising

colour, which Helen at once perceived, but passed over quite unnoticed, concluding that Mrs. Jenkins's confusion had something to do with the good-for-nothingness of her husband—a point on which Helen deeply commiserated her lot, because, though she had been told no particulars, she felt perfectly convinced that Mr. Jenkins's good-for-nothingness, and no other cause, was at the bottom of his wife's present dependent situation—'no, thank you, ma'am, I would rather go alone, if you please; and if you will allow me, I should like very much to take baby. I think you can trust me not to take her into any place or to see any person of whom you would disapprove.'

'Indeed, I can,' said Helen cordially. 'I can trust you most completely. You shall take baby, and you shall go where you like, and stay as long as you like, and,' she added, laying her hand gently on Mrs. Jenkins's shoulder, as she stooped over the nursing chair, 'never think it necessary to

tell me more than you wish, never think that I wish to drive your confidence faster than its natural pace.'

Then she immediately left the room, and Mrs. Jenkins, after a few minutes, got herself and the child ready and went out.

Miss Montressor was very much pleased with the aspect of affairs in New York. For the first time in her life, she felt herself a person of real and indubitable importance; the reception had pleased her; she was charmed with the look of the city, and delighted with her quarters at Fifth-avenue Hotel; the largeness and liberality of all the arrangements for public comfort, which cannot fail to strike the newly-arrived visitor in New York, duly impressed themselves upon Miss Montressor, and she had hardly become accustomed to her large and pleasant rooms, she was still discovering new perfections in them, and finding out points of advantage in everything American over

everything English, when she was told that a person wished to see her.

Visions of eager strangers bent on obtaining her autograph and photograph, dreams of interviewing, even notions of a sharp contention between rival managers, flashed in a moment across her lively imagination, as she requested that the person —no indication of the sex of the applicant had been given—should be invited to walk up.

Miss Montressor was already very handsomely dressed, so that nothing remained but for her to assume a statuesque and striking attitude in which to await the arrival of her visitor. Half a minute sufficed to show her that her preparations were thrown away: no fashionable lounger, no splendidly-dressed lady, no eager man of business, was this visitor who thus early claimed admittance to her; only a plainly-dressed woman, carrying an infant in her arms, who stretched her disengaged hand

eagerly towards her with a glad cry of, 'Clara! Clara!'

Miss Montressor recoiled — to do her justice, it was only for a moment—the next she took the woman's hand, and saying, 'Hush! do not speak so loud,' kissed her.

'O, how glad I am to see you, Clara! You see, your grand new name comes quite easy to me. I have never forgotten that you told me not to call you Matty any more. How glad I was when I heard you were coming out, and though at first I took it very unkind that you did not write to tell me, I soon knew it was because you were sure I should see it in the papers.'

The speaker had seated herself, loosened her shawl, and taken off her bonnet before Miss Montressor had recovered from the slight constraint of the first surprise.

'Yes,' she said, 'I am very glad, indeed, to see you; but you have put me in a mortal fright. I don't want to be unkind, you know—and you're a sensible woman—only

think how it would ruin me if Jenkins came about after me here.'

'Jenkins can't, my dear soul,' said the other. 'He is away, he ain't in New York; and if he was he would do nothing to harm you, bless you. He and I both understand that we must keep our distance from you now—not that you're not a good sister, as you always was and always will be, but for your sake and ourselves too — only you must forgive my coming to you. I really couldn't bear it, and I knew it was all safe; it is such a time since I have seen you, and you have done such a deal in the time. Only to think, Clara, of your being a regular star, and leading lady at the Thespian.'

Miss Montressor laughed a good-natured laugh, but with a peculiar sound in it, which comes of a superior knowledge of the world and a truer test of greatness than that of the speaker.

'My dear, you have got very funny notions about me. I have not done badly;

but as to the great things, I have not many of them to count up, and this is the very first really big chance I have had.'

'Don't be afraid that I shall spoil it,' said Bess, laying the sleeping child comfortably in a corner of a luxurious settee, and seating herself beside Miss Montressor, with one arm placed fondly round her neck, while her honest gray eyes, full of tears, looked searchingly in the other's face. 'I would rather never see you for half my life than harm you, dear; and I suppose it would harm you, even in this country, where everybody is free and equal, they say, if you were known to have a servant for a sister?'

'A servant, Bess!' said Miss Montressor with surprise and displeasure. 'How is that? What do you mean?'

'Just what I say to you. I am a servant. I am a nurse in a very good family here in town; it is a good place, and I am happy, trusted, useful, and comfortable.'

'Nurse!' said Miss Montressor; 'is that your nursechild, then? I thought it was your own.'

'Mine? O dear no. My baby was a poor little cripple, and he was taken away from all his troubles a little while ago. Jenkins was leaving me for a profitable job he had got, and I could not stand the loneliness; besides we were very poor, and so I took a place. It is Mrs. Griswold's, in Fifth-avenue, and I get along very well indeed. Mrs. Griswold is alone, like myself. Her husband is in Europe; and she gave me leave to come here to-day, and to bring the child, so as I might be free, as kind as possible.'

'Fifth-avenue?' said Miss Montressor; 'why, that's a fashionable part of New York. I know that much, though I have only been one night in the place. I knew it before, however. This lady must be a person of importance. My dear Bess, you didn't let out to her where you were coming to?'

'I did not,' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'I only told her some one had come to New York that I wanted to see, and she never asked another question. She is a perfect lady, is Mrs. Griswold, and respects everybody's confidence. She will ask me nothing when I get back; and when you meet her, I am sure you need not be afraid she will know that the famous Miss Montressor is her nurse's sister.'

There was just the slightest tone of hurt feeling in Mrs. Jenkins's kindly voice, and Miss Montressor, who was as kindly as herself at bottom—only a little overlaid by the affectation of her profession and her associations—sympathetically perceived it. 'The gentleman talked nonsense, Bess,' she said, bestowing on her sister a hearty hug, to which the other responded. 'Here we are now, and here we may not be long uninterrupted, so let us have a talk while we may. What's Jenkins about?'

'I don't know, darling. No harm, but

some business of a private nature, which will keep him away for some time—it's only a commission agency, but I don't know in what.'

Mrs. Jenkins was the most loyal of wives, and even to her beloved sister, the pride and delight of her life, would not have betrayed her husband's confidence, and Miss Montressor was in reality profoundly indifferent to the answer to the question which she had just asked. She did not care one straw where Jenkins was, provided he was not in New York, or what he was doing, provided his occupation was not of a nature to expose her to any risk of contact with him. Satisfied on this point, she was quite ready to respond to her sister's affectionate inquisitiveness respecting herself and her concerns, and the two plunged immediately into an animated and confidential conversation, which brought out the best sides of the characters of both.

Miss Montressor gave her sister a tolerably correct and exceedingly pleasant description of her career during the years which had parted them—years which had been very prosperous on the whole for the friendless young actress, and not unmarked by acts of generosity towards her sister, whose lot had been very different. That Mrs. Jenkins was so poor as she had been when we first made her acquaintance in Bleeker-street was not Miss Montressor's fault; she had frequently assisted her sister and her good-for-nothing husband out of her, at first, very moderate means; but when Bess saw that Jenkins's good-for-nothingness was an established fact, her honesty of purpose and truthfulness of mind made her make a resolution to accept no more assistance from Clara. 'I don't mind working hard,' was her mental comment on the situation, 'that he may have money to waste—I am his wife; but Clara shall not do it. I will never touch a shilling of her

earnings more ;' and she had written to Clara asking her to abstain from sending them money.

This, to tell the truth, Miss Montressor, who had had an instinctively bad opinion of her brother-in-law, was not sorry to do ; and so her knowledge of the Jenkinses' circumstances became slight and confused. Her sister could not very well keep her informed of them without appearing to ask for the aid which she had deprecated; she therefore wrote vaguely and seldom, and Miss Montressor had acquiesced in this latterly, contenting herself with the reflection that she was now so extensively reported in the newspapers as being here or there, and playing this or that engagement to more or less appreciative audiences, that really Bess would know as much about her from the journals as she cared to tell, for there were one or two things she did not wish to tell. But she was brimful of news now, and Mrs. Jenkins's impression that Miss Montressor

was by far the finest actress in existence was deepened by the narrative of triumphs which her sister poured into her ear. It was not an untrue narrative, it was only coloured; and yet, with all their confidence, with all their eager talk, there was a reticence on both sides.

Miss Montressor never mentioned Mr. Dolby.

Mrs. Jenkins made no allusion to Trenton Warren.

Bess had a great deal to say respecting Mrs. Griswold; and here told her sister, with lively pleasure, of that lady's promise to take her with herself to the play. 'But,' she added, 'she will have the satisfaction of seeing you before I shall, Clara. You see, I didn't care to press her so much as asking to go on the first or second night would have done — I thought it would not seem reasonable, and might arouse a suspicion; and if it did not do you harm, it might make you angry; and I would rather know

you were playing for a whole week to all New York, and turning the place upside down about you, and sit at home without the chance of seeing you, than vex you; and so I have got to wait patiently until my betters are served. But I know she will keep her word; and, as I was going to say, she will see you before I shall, for she is going to-night.'

'To-night?' said Miss Montressor; 'that's quick! Is she as fond of the play as you are?'

'I think she is very fond of it. She tells me she and Mr. Griswold always went to see anything that was worth seeing. But now that he is away she is very particular indeed. She never goes anywhere except amongst old friends, and she does that very sparingly; and as to a theatre or concert, she has never put her foot in one since he left.'

'O, then, Mr. Griswold is not at home?' said Miss Montressor.

'O dear no! he went away before I came. I have never seen him.'

'Where is he?'

'He is in London, I believe, doing some business in a very large way. People say Griswold is a very rich man; and I suppose he wants to be richer, like all the rest of them, and must pay a price for it—pretty big price too, going to the other end of the world, and leaving his young wife alone so long. She mopes dreadfully; I am quite glad she is going to-night, if it is only to cheer her up. She was in great spirits at getting so good a place. It was bespoke long before you came.'

'You had been talking about me, I suppose?'

'Of course I had. I had just told her you were the finest actress in the world, and she had better make haste to see you.'

'Have you any idea in what part of the theatre Mrs. Griswold would be sitting?' said Miss Montressor. 'I very seldom try

to see any one from the stage; and most times, when one does try, one cannot do it. But I will have a look at her, if you will tell me where she will sit.'

'I can tell you,' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'She will be right at the end of the dress circle, last seat but two, right-hand side; and I know what she is going to wear, so that you can tell her by her dress. An old gentleman and an old lady and their son are going with her—it is just a party of four.'

'Tell me about her dress,' said Miss Montressor, 'and the colour of her hair.'

'She has a quantity of very fine brown hair,' said Mrs. Jenkins, 'which matches her eyes, and she never wears any ornaments in it. The dress she is going to wear to-night is pale blue velvet, square cut, with turnovers, and very fine guipure lace. She always wears plain gold ornaments with that gown, and a blue-and-gold fan.'

'Very well,' said Miss Montressor; 'I will look out for the blue velvet and the

guipure, for the gold ornaments, and the blue-and-gold fan.'

A timepiece rang out the hour.

'Dear me, how late it is!' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'I had no notion I had been here so long. I think I must go now, Clara; but I shall get down to see you again before long, and you will come to see me, won't you?'

'My dear Bess, what are you thinking of?' replied her sister. 'How do you suppose I am to keep the secret, which you see I cannot help keeping? It is not unkindness and it is not snobbishness; it is only for the sake of the interests which I cannot afford to throw over. If I am seen going to Mrs. Griswold's house to visit Mrs. Griswold's nurse, why, if she didn't find it out, as I suppose she need not—no doubt I could always see you in a room to ourselves—just fancy how the servants would talk. There is not one in New York, I suppose, by this time who does not know

my face; and it would be all over the place in a few hours. No, no; you must come and see me when you can. It is much safer, and just as easy.'

'I really think you might let me tell Mrs. Griswold,' said Mrs. Jenkins; 'you have no notion how kind she is, and how free from nonsense and pretence of all sorts. Her heart would be touched if I told her how we two were left poor motherless children to the care of our old aunt, who pushed us out into the world when we were almost babies, to do the best we could each for ourselves, and how you did the best, and it was very good, and I did—well, not quite the worst after all.'

A sweet smile, though sad, passed over the frank features of the speaker, a spark of the ever-burning lamp of life within her, that light which glorified even so mean an object as Ephraim Jenkins.

'Good Heavens,' thought Miss Montressor, 'she actually believes in that vagabond

still, and is as fond of him as ever; she is perfectly incorrigible!' She did not give utterance to these sentiments, but took a most affectionate leave of her sister, even bestowing some transient expressions of admiration upon little Mary Griswold, who was wide awake by this time, and staring about her with a greedy curiosity which succeeds the first stages of stolid indifference incidental to babyhood. She did not kiss the child, she was not quite equal to that — Mrs. Jenkins wondered how she could deny herself the indulgence—but she patted her and chirped to her, and sent her sister away delighted with her amiability and her affability.

How hard it was for Bess to keep from talking of her visit when she went to assist at Mrs. Griswold's evening toilette nobody but Bess knew. When Mrs. Griswold had gone down-stairs, and driven away in the carriage which her friends had brought to fetch her, arrayed and looking very hand-

some in the pale blue velvet gown, with the guipure trimming, in the gold ornaments, and carrying her blue-and-gold fan, Mrs. Jenkins indemnified herself for the unnatural restraint by talking rapturously to the baby.

An enormous crowd of well-dressed people was flocking into Van Buren's Varieties, to the great delight of Mr. Van Buren himself, who stood at the checktaker's wicket, with his friend Mr. Morris Jacobs by his side. Mr. Van Buren had that amount of vanity which is inseparable from the theatrical profession, and to see himself recognised by members of the crowd, to hear the flattering remarks made on his personal appearance and his histrionic talents, rendered him supremely happy. Mr. Jacobs, who had no pretensions to manly beauty, being a short stout man, with an enormous head and an exaggerated Jewish cast of countenance, contented himself with silently counting the people as they came in, and

keeping a wary eye upon the checktaker. It was a long time since the Varieties had boasted such an audience; every seat was taken, and the large lobbies at the back of the circles were inconveniently crowded. There was scarcely one in the many-sided phases of New York society which was not represented. The journals had done their work so well, and Mr. Van Buren and Mr. Jacobs had worked their various agencies with such success, that a desire to see the English actress and renew acquaintance with the handsome tragedian had been generated amongst people who had not visited the theatre for years. Good old Knickerbocker families, prouder of the 'Van' before their names than of the enormous fortunes which had accrued to them from the sale of the lands which had once formed the gardens and grounds of their old red-brick houses, and which now formed avenues and streets in the most fashionable districts; steady church-goers,

whose wildest idea of dissipation was attendance at a lecture or a mass meeting; men who passed their days in Wall-street, and their evenings at the extemporised exchange in the hall of the Fifth-avenue Hotel —all these classes seemed to have caught the infection, and were largely represented. The regular attendants at theatrical representations — the club men, Fifth-avenue families, the people who wished to be thought 'in the style,' and whose newly-gotten wealth has made of them a plutocracy as imperious, as intolerant, and as hollow as any aristocracy in the Old World —all these were in fullest force. Such a réunion was seldom to be seen at so late a period; and the buzzing conversation of friends which took place before the commencement of the play was not, as usual, about the balls and entertainments to which they were invited, but treated rather of their intended summer flights; the various merits of style at Saratoga, rural quiet at

Lake George, boisterous frivolity at Long Branch, or sea breezes at Newport being fully discussed.

Behind the scenes, too, there was very great excitement. Bryan Duval knew exactly the kind of audience he might expect to welcome his return and Miss Montressor's first appearance; he knew that on such an occasion his appeal ought to be made rather to the sympathies than the intelligence of the people; and so, reserving for a further occasion *Romeo and Juliet*, and other specimens of poetical drama in which he knew that he and Miss Montressor could help each other largely, and make themselves appreciated by the critical and the educated, he had determined upon commencing his campaign with the celebrated Irish drama, *Cruiskeen Lawn*. The American version of this play — it underwent considerable modification when acted in the United Kingdom—contained a goodly amount of treasonable speeches, denuncia-

tion of British kings and British government, and therefore greatly acceptable to that portion of the New York population which made their entry into America through the fair haven of Castle Garden; the dialogue, too, was sprinkled with numerous tropes and metaphors which Bryan had carefully culled from Tom Moore's poetical works. When there is to be added to this that it gave scope for pretty scenery, quaint coquettish peasant dresses for Miss Montressor, much love-making, and various astonishing feats, such as diving down a well and rushing through a blazing cottage, for Mr. Duval himself, it was evident that those who loved sensation were likely to be gratified.

Mr. Duval had arrived at the theatre early, donned his stage costume, and was occupying himself in looking after the members of his troupe. He found Mr. Covington, like most novices, in deep distress as regards his costume, and assisted that

young gentleman to make up his face, and showed him how to wear his sword. He gave Mr. Skrymshire a little more red eyebrow, and threw a Hibernian expression into the low comedian's somewhat long face by the simple process of making two thick black streaks under his nose, which imparted to that organ a turn-up appearance. With Mrs. Regan, on the contrary, he had to tone down the Hibernianism, that worthy old woman being desirous of expressing her nationality by entering into a fight with her attendant dresser. Finally, Mr. Duval knocked at Miss Montressor's dressing-room, and being bidden to come in, stood in the doorway and expressed his delight by clapping his hands.

'Nothing could be better, my dear,' said he. 'Why on earth didn't I have you for the original Kathleen Mavourneen in London? If I had, I should have made 32,000*l.* by this time. The rouge a little higher up on the left cheek, dear, I think, and the

right eyebrow, too, a hair's-breadth longer —that will do nicely! You must take off your rings, dear; peasant girls in Kerry don't wear blue silk stockings either, but that's a poetical license; but I do not think the public will stand the rings. That's right! Now just remember one thing, that the Irish brogue is permanent, and not a temporary affliction, and that you are sometimes in the habit of forgetting it, and talking in your native Regent-street accent; think of that, and hold to it all through; and if you stick at all for words—I don't think you will, for you struck me as being letter perfect — but if you do, just say "Arrah!" and "Bedad!" until I can get alongside and prompt you. Now, then, it is my time to go on.'

Two minutes after, an enormous roar of applause welcomed Mr. Bryan's return to the United States, a roar which very speedily was exceeded twentyfold by the greeting given to Miss Montressor. There

is an idea that an American audience is not enthusiastic, but it is a false one, for if you please them there is no people so lavish in their favour. The ladies waved their handkerchiefs, the gentlemen cheered and clapped their hands, the rougher portion of the community roared and shrieked until they were hoarse, and Miss Montressor stood curtsying and curtsying, her hands crossed over her little blue bodice, and her eyes demurely cast upon the ground.

When silence was restored and the business of the play recommenced, she took advantage of the first opportunity to look in the direction where, according to Bess's information, she expected to see Mrs. Griswold. There, accordingly, at the end of the first circle, in the last seat but one on the right-hand side, sat a lady with a quantity of fine brown hair, dressed in plain blue velvet and guipure lace, and bearing a blue-and-gold fan. What caused Miss Montressor to start as she gazed upon this

face? What rendered her so oblivious for the moment that Bryan Duval had to prompt her? Mrs. Griswold had never been out of America, and yet Miss Montressor could have sworn she had seen her before. Whenever she could she stole a glance at the face, and still found it familiar to her; but it was not until nearly the close of the play that the right idea came to her.

It came like an inspiration. 'The portrait!' she said to herself; 'the portrait! That woman may or may not be Mrs. Griswold, but assuredly she is the original of the portrait set in the watch which was shown to me on the terrace at Richmond by Mr. Foster.'

CHAPTER VI.

STARTLING NEWS.

THE curtain had fallen upon the happy marriage of Kathleen Mavourneen and Comether O'Shaughnessy. The talented representatives of the two characters had been called forward several times amidst huzzahs, and most of the audience had quitted the theatre; and Miss Montressor had retired to her dressing-room, where, throwing herself into a chair, she fell into a reverie.

'What could be the meaning of that extraordinary resemblance between the lady who had sat in the very seat which Bess had assured her had been taken by Mrs. Griswold, and the portrait which Mr. Foster had shown her on the terrace at Richmond,

as that of his wife? There must have been some mistake; Bess must have made a blunder about the exact position in the circle, or Mrs. Griswold must have been unable to obtain the seat on which she had first set her mind!' But then came the identity of the costume the lady in the circle wore—the exact dress which Bess had described as that which her mistress was about to wear; the blue velvet and guipure lace, the plain gold ornaments, the blue-and-gold fan—all were there. It was most astonishing—Miss Montressor admitted that; but she could not understand why, as she admitted it, a sombre presentiment, a sense of some impending calamity, seemed to come across her.

She was roused by a knock at the door, following immediately on which Mr. Bryan Duval put in his head.

'Clara, my dear,' said he, 'I will get dressed as quickly as possible; I have got a room at Delmonico's.'

'Delmonico's!' echoed Miss Montressor. 'What's that?'

'Something very nice,' said Mr. Duval; 'the best restaurant in the world. The piece has been such a go, that I could not do less than ask a few people to an improvised supper—Van Buren and two or three of the press people, you know. Of course we must have you, and old Mrs. Regan will come as chaperone. It will be remarkably jolly, and I shouldn't wonder if there were a few lines about it in to-morrow morning's paper, which will be quite worth the expense.'

Supper was a weakness with Miss Montressor. When she was acting she didn't care particularly about dinner, invariably refused all invitations to that meal, and ate sparingly at a comparatively early hour; but supper had always been her favourite amusement. In the early days of her stage apprenticeship, long before her Christian name was Clara or her surname Mon-

tressor, when she was a struggling, raw-boned, weak-eyed girl, playing chamber-maids and general utility in a provincial theatre, with a salary of eighteen shillings a week, she used to devote a portion of that modest sum to the purchase of pigs' pettitoes and polonies, on which, with a pint of very flat porter, she used to regale herself in her wretched garret after her return from the theatre. After she had established herself, and made a success in later life, she kept up the same practice, the Brompton villa being substituted for the garret, boned turkeys, *pâté de foie gras*, and cold game for the delicacies above mentioned, and the society of pleasant Bohemians for the cruel solitude. So Miss Montressor intimated to Bryan Duval her acceptance of his invitation, and made all possible haste to get ready for the scene of action.

As soon as she was dressed she joined Mr. Duval and Mrs. Regan, and the three drove off in a carriage together.

Miss Montressor thought there was an air of comfort as she stepped across the little garden and entered the bright cheery hall at Delmonico's, with its bureau immediately fronting the street, its glimpse of well-dressed men and women, attentive waiters, steaming dishes, and silver-necked flasks lolling out of ice-pails, in the large room on the left, and its broad staircase, up and down which the nimble attendants were flitting. But when she found herself on the first floor, in the room furnished with extravagant richness, but in perfect French taste, and looked through the open folding-doors into another room, where the round table for a dozen convives was already spread, and shimmering with its accumulation of plate and glass, she could not resist clapping and giving a little scream of delight.

'Welcome to the star of the evening,' cried Mr. Van Buren, his hair poodled up into a magnificent curling crop, his mous-

tache lacquered and pointed in the latest fashion, advancing to do homage. 'I have to thank you, my dear young lady, for your performance to-night.'

'If you were pleased,' said Miss Montressor, with a sweet smile, which went straight to the heart of the inflammable manager, 'I have every reason to be satisfied.'

'Pleased!' cried he. 'I not merely look upon the success as certain, but I regard this as the first of a series of visits which you shall pay to this country, and by which I shall be enabled to help you to realise a fortune; and there is something selfish in the thought,' he added, 'for it will not merely give me the assurance of seeing you constantly, but enable me to support your absence with the certain idea of your return.'

Miss Montressor smiled upon him again, and Mr. Van Buren immediately began to calculate how he could dispose of the thirty-

fourth Mrs. Van Buren, who was at that moment on his hands, and substitute the new favourite for her.

'Now,' said Mr. Duval, bustling about, 'let us get to table as soon as possible. Those who have not been introduced to Miss Montressor already had better come to me, and I will perform the ceremony. My dear Clara, I think you already know Mr. Willy Webster of the *Democrat*,' he added, pushing forward a dirty little man with soiled shirt, and clothes shining with grease — 'not clean, perhaps, but decidedly clever,' said Bryan, dropping his voice; 'and you must shake hands with him.'

Mr. Looby of the *Scarifier*, and Mr. O'Gog of the *Growl*, came forward and made their obeisance; Henry P. Remington and Samuel D. Silliman, two young men about town, who had more money than brains, and less manners than either; a gray-headed man, with a thin keen face, who seemed to know

everything and every one, and who was universally addressed as Uncle William, completed the party.

'Now are we all here?' said Bryan Duval, who had seated Miss Montressor between himself and Mr. Van Buren, and who was compelled to stand up to look round the table, so large and luxurious was the basket of flowers in the centre—'are we all here?'

'No,' said Willy Webster from the other side of the table. 'Here, next me, is a chair for our good friend Banquo.'

'Who is our good friend Banquo on this occasion? Let me see,' said Bryan Duval. 'Looby, O'Gog—'pon my word, I can't recollect.'

'I thought you told me you had sent round to the *Globe* office to tell Brighthurst to come up?' said Van Buren.

'To be sure,' cried Bryan. 'Brighthurst is Banquo. Why on earth is he not here?'

'I sincerely hope he will come,' said Willy Webster.

'And I—and I!' cried several others.

'Mr. Brighthurst seems to be a general favourite,' said Miss Montressor to her neighbour—'what are his particular attractions?'

'I am sure I don't know,' said Mr. Van Buren, a little piqued; 'he is a good sort of fellow, I believe.'

'Brighthurst, my dear,' said Duval, 'is one of the cleverest men on the press of this or any other country. He has written everything in his time—five-act plays, political pamphlets, orthodox sermons, and hymns which would draw tears from a hard-shell Baptist—then he's very good-looking and capital talk. I shall be sincerely disappointed if he doesn't come soon. I am sure you and he would get on well together.'

'Do you think he would be horrified at seeing me eating these enormous

oysters?' said Miss Montressor, with a little playfulness, turning to her other neighbour.

'I don't know whether *he* would, but I am not,' said Mr. Van Buren. 'Everything you do is done with a grace possessed by no other woman in the world.'

'O, Mr. Van Buren,' said the actress with an upward glance, 'that compliment is even more difficult to swallow than the large oysters.'

'Now, boys,' cried Bryan Duval, as the first crack of the champagne corks was heard, 'there must be an exception to the general rule in America to-night—we will have no speech-making.'

'We must have one toast,' cried Willy Webster. 'You won't refuse to drink this — Success to the *Cruiskeen Lawn*.'

'Stay!' cried Van Buren, holding up his hand; 'add this to it—And all our thanks to the lovely Kathleen!'

The men rose to their feet to drink the toast, and had not resumed their seats when the door opened, and a tall middle-aged man, with a bald head, aquiline nose, and large grizzled whiskers, entered the room. He made straight for Duval, and shook hands with him warmly.

'My dear Brighthurst,' cried the host, 'I am delighted to see you. We were all just now regretting your absence, and if you had not been so erratic a being, should have wondered at its cause. However, here you are—let me present you to Miss Montressor.'

After his introduction, Mr. Brighthurst took the vacant seat, and bending over to the young actress, said:

'You must not fully believe all these gentlemen say about my Bohemianism and erratic propensities, Miss Montressor; living in crystal palaces themselves, they should be the last to throw stones. They cannot understand, these frivolous butter-

flies, that I am a steady man, and that I was prevented from coming here by attention to my duty.'

'No, we certainly cannot understand that,' said Mr. Looby.

'No, indeed, bedad,' said Mr. O'Gog; 'that is not your usual form, Brighthurst, anyhow!'

'It may not be my usual form, sweet flower of Erin,' said Mr. Brighthurst; 'but what I say happens to be correct as regards to-night. I was detained at the office to write a short editorial upon some news which just came in.'

'News!' cried Willy Webster. 'And what was it, pray? Has Tweed been nominated for the Presidency, or has A. T. Stewart proved to be nothing but a dead head? Has the Commodore issued a new lot of central stock, or has John Morrissy joined the Particular Baptists? Speak the word, O Brighthurst, and ease our impatient minds.'

'What I speak of is English news from the latest files of London papers, which were delivered this evening, my dear Willy,' said Brighthurst quietly.

'European news!' cried Webster. 'Has Queen Victoria sent for Sam Ward at last, or is the Prince Imperial going to be united to Queen Isabella, and thus consolidate the two thrones?'

'The news does not treat of any such important personages or subjects,' said Brighthurst; 'it simply sends us details of the English murder, information of which was cabled some days ago.'

'A murder!' cried Bryan Duval. 'You cannot possibly have the joyful news for me that the victim was a tailor living in the neighbourhood of Bond-street?'

'No,' said Brighthurst with a slight smile; 'nor was the crime committed in London. The victim was an American gentleman of the name of Foster.'

Miss Montressor turned deadly pale, and

set down untasted the glass she was in the act of raising to her lips.

'What name did you say, Brighthurst?' said Duval, turning quickly to him. 'Foster, an American? Where was the murder committed?'

'In Liverpool,' said Brighthurst. 'He had been staying at the Adelphi Hotel.'

'Great Heavens,' cried Duval, 'this is most terrific!'

Miss Montressor buried her face in her handkerchief, and sobbed silently.

'What is the meaning of this?' asked Mr. Van Buren, while a look of inquiry passed round the table.

'The meaning is simply that this unfortunate gentleman was well known to me and all my party. He took a great interest in theatricals, and actually accompanied us to Liverpool to see the last of us before we sailed. It must have been about that time that his murder took place.'

'It was within a day or two of your sailing,' said Mr. Brighthurst.

'But what was the name of the assassin? What was the motive for his crime? For God's sake, my dear fellow, tell us more about it!' cried Bryan.

'I am very sorry, my dear Duval, that I cannot give you any particulars of your poor friend's fate,' said Brighthurst. 'The coroner's jury have returned a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown, and no trace of the assassin had been discovered up to the time of the papers going to press. I know this much, for I made it the text of my editorial, that the English police do not seem more active in discovering the perpetrators of great crimes than our detectives here. I shall, however, be able to let you know all about it in a few minutes, as I instructed a boy to bring a proof of my article here, and with it a copy of the London *Times*, containing the account of the coroner's in-

quest, which I proposed reading in bed to-night.'

'I shall await it with the greatest anxiety,' said Bryan. Then turning to Miss Montressor, whose face was still buried in her handkerchief, and dropping his voice, he said: 'There is no occasion yet, at all events, to be so overwhelmed, my dear Clara. Foster is by no means an uncommon American name. Liverpool is even more frequented by Americans than London, and all of them who visit Liverpool of course go to the Adelphi. The victim in this awful case may not be our poor friend, after all.'

'But the date,' whispered poor Miss Montressor; 'the date of the murder concurs just with the time when he would be at Liverpool; though, by the way, he told me he intended to return to London on the evening of our departure. Something, however, may have detained him; and, besides, I have a kind of presentiment—something

which I cannot shake off—that we shall discover it was our friend Mr. Foster, and no one else.'

'I confess I feel very uncomfortable and desponding about it myself,' said Bryan; 'and I should not be surprised if— What is this?' he cried, as the waiter entered, bringing a packet for Mr. Brighthurst. 'O, the newspaper at last!'

'Pray take it, my dear Duval, and satisfy yourself at once,' said Brighthurst, handing the paper across to Bryan; 'I can fully apprehend your anxiety.'

Bryan took the journal, and, in the midst of a sympathetic silence, turned it over until he came upon the spot which he was seeking—a description of the proceedings at the coroner's inquest. In a broken voice he read out certain details with which the readers of this story are already familiar: the finding of the body on the landing-place of the warehouse, the evidence of the outdoor clerk, the two po-

licemen, and the various persons present at the scene, the fly-driver, who recognised the victim as one of his customers, and the manager of the Adelphi, who gave evidence that the body was that of Mr. Foster, who had been staying at the hotel.

'There is no doubt at all about it,' said Bryan Duval, laying down the paper for a minute, his eyes filling with tears. 'It was poor Foster; it was our poor friend!'

'It is too dreadful to think of,' said Miss Montressor, giving way to her grief.

'Who can the murderer be? What can have been the motive for such a deed?' cried Duval, after reading a little farther. 'Foster was the kindest, gentlest soul in the world—a man who could not possibly have had an enemy; besides, he knew but few people in England, and none, I should have thought, in Liverpool.'

'Perhaps he was in the habit of sporting his money,' said Mr. O'Gog; 'there are terrible thieves in them Liverpool taverns.'

'No, that could not have been,' said Bryan, pointing to a passage in the paper; 'for it says here that though no papers, cards, or letters were found upon the body, his purse, containing several sovereigns and some silver, keys, penknife, and pencil, were found in the pockets untouched.'

'That's a strange circumstance,' said Mr. Brighthurst, looking at it with the professional eye of an editorial writer. 'My experience leads me to believe that there are two principal motives which lead to the commission of murder—lust of gain or desire for vengeance. By the finding of the purse, the first motive is wanting in this instance; and as regards the second, you tell me he had very few acquaintances in England, and was the last man in the world likely to have any enemies, much less one fierce and implacable enough to do such a deed as this.'

'He was the kindest-hearted man in the world,' sobbed Miss Montressor; 'always

willing to do everybody a service, and more like a woman than a man in the soft sweetness of his disposition.'

'Stay,' said Bryan, who had again taken up the paper; 'here are some farther particulars. The manager of the hotel deposed that, on examining the room occupied by the deceased, he found a small American valise, containing a suit of clothes, some linen, and the usual dressing apparatus; a valuable gold watch had been left on the dressing-table, which, at the request of the jury, was handed to them. Here,' continued Bryan, still reading the newspaper, 'a curious incident occurred. One of the jury was our well-known townsman, Mr. Hand, the watch and clock maker, who served his time in America. On examining this watch, Mr. Hand declared, without hesitation, that a certain portion of its works was made under the patent of the celebrated house of Tiffany, in New York. All possible search and inquiry seems to

have been made by the police and others concerned, but without any effect. The conclusion of the story is to be found in the verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown, so we must wait and see what time will bring forth. Poor Foster—poor fellow!'

'Poor dear Mr. Foster!' sobbed Miss Montressor, in great agitation. 'I declare it is one of the most horrible things I ever knew. What will his poor wife say, when she hears the news?'

'His wife! Has he a wife?' asked Mr. Brighthurst.

'O dear yes; a sweetly pretty woman, with one young child.'

'It's pretty rough on her, poor thing,' said Mr. Brighthurst, a shadow stealing over his handsome features.

'Yes; and the most awful part of it is, that even now she must be in complete ignorance of what has happened, for I saw her this very night at the theatre.'

'At the theatre?' cried several.

'At the theatre, not two hours since,' cried Miss Montressor. 'I have most excellent reasons for believing that the lady I saw was Mrs. Foster.'

'My dear Miss Montressor,' said Mr. Brighthurst, leaning forward, 'I think, I trust, you are mistaken. The news that an American gentleman named Foster had been found murdered in Liverpool was received here by cable, without any particulars, several days since, and was published in all the newspapers. It would have been impossible that Mrs. Foster, or some of her family or friends, should not have seen it.'

'It may be that I am mistaken,' said Miss Montressor. 'I trust I am, for it is an awful thing to think of that pretty creature amusing herself at the theatre with this awful thunder-cloud ready to break over her head.' And Miss Montressor's tears again began to flow.

Bryan Duval, who had been listening

silently but most attentively to this colloquy, then roused himself.

'I think, my dear Clara, you had better retire for a few minutes, and endeavour to compose yourself. Gentlemen, I am sure you will excuse Miss Montressor for a time; this news has been too much for her. We will rejoin you later.'

All rose as he spoke, and Bryan Duval, taking the actress by the arm, led her through the folding-doors into the adjoining apartment, and carefully closed the doors behind him.

'Try to quiet yourself,' said Bryan Duval, as he placed her in a chair beside an open window, and, seating himself alongside of her, assumed a perfectly tranquil air. 'This is a very serious business, and I want to speak to you about it without delay, and out of hearing of these people. It is better they should not get hold of such facts as may be hidden under the surface of this horrible event prematurely. Will you tell

me as quietly as you can exactly what you mean about the lady whom you saw at the theatre to-night? That's right; you are quieter now; don't speak for a minute, until you can do so without sobbing; try to recollect every circumstance, and to be perfectly exact.'

The purpose-like composure of his manner had its due effect upon the excitable but not foolish woman to whom he spoke. She made a steady effort, and subdued the rising hysterical agitation, and after a minute or two was quite able to speak plainly.

'You remember,' she said, 'the dinner Mr. Foster gave us at Richmond, and that I had a good deal of talk with him both down at Richmond and in the carriage as we came home?'

Bryan Duval nodded.

'He told me a good deal about himself, and spoke much of his wife, to whom he seemed to be quite unusually attached. He said he would introduce me to her, as he

knew she would like me; that she was very fond of the stage, had a passion for artistes' society, and a great many other things of the same kind. Of course I asked him what she was like, and he gave me a great description of her beauty and grace. I suppose I did not keep down a smile of something like incredulity, or at least of a suspicion of some exaggeration, in this description, for he said, "You shall see for yourself, Miss Montressor, whether I am exaggerating like an absent lover my Helen's charms;" and he took out a watch—one of a very peculiar construction; I had never seen one like it—and opened it by touching a spring so carefully concealed that, when he put it into my hands afterwards, and told me to try if I could open it, I could not even perceive where the spring lay. The cover flew back and disclosed a miniature of a woman who was certainly very pretty, and had the kind of face which one does not forget. I looked at it for a good

while; held it in my hand—for Mr. Foster had taken it off his watch-chain—as we walked up and down on the terrace, and made myself perfectly familiar with the features; the arrangement of the hair particularly struck me, and I remarked to him how well it suited the face. He said yes, he had always thought so; that his wife had very good taste, and was her own hairdresser. You will see presently why I tell you these particulars.'

'I especially wish you to tell me every particular you can recollect,' said Bryan Duval.

'I do not think there was anything remarkable except that in what he said to me,' said Miss Montressor. 'The subject was again referred to during our drive home, and he told me the watch containing the portrait was a parting gift from his wife. She had given it to him on the very evening before he had left New York, and he had promised always to wear it. I thought

it a little unusual for a man to speak so frankly and so freely of a thing of the kind, and I suppose I said it or looked it. I do not remember that, but I do recollect his saying, "Out of the fulness of the heart, you know, Miss Montressor, the mouth speaketh," when neither a lack of sympathy nor ridicule was to be apprehended. I thought him a man of considerable feeling, and that he found his sojourn in England very wearisome, so that he was relieved by finding any one, even a stranger, to whom he might talk of his home.'

'He was not a reticent man,' said Bryan Duval, 'as I have good reason to know; a reason which I shall tell you presently if, as I fear, there is more in this matter than meets the eye, and I have to ask your help in a painful duty that may fall to my share. But pray go on, and tell me what is the connection between Mr. Foster's confidence to you and the lady whom you saw to-night.'

Miss Montressor hesitated for just one moment. Could she explain herself fully without the revelation of the family secret she had strongly desired to preserve? Not if Bryan Duval were to question her very closely on material issues. 'Never mind,' she thought, 'I must risk it. I won't tell it unless I am forced, but I cannot hold my tongue here—it is too serious.'

'I have a friend in New York,' she said, 'who came to see me yesterday, and in the course of some gossip about this place and the people in it she happened to mention a certain Mrs. Griswold, who holds a high position here, and who is a great admirer of the drama. My friend told me that Mrs. Griswold had been particularly anxious to see me in one of my best parts, and had taken places for our first appearance. This Mrs. Griswold, it appears, was very handsome, very charming, and altogether a somebody. I fancied I should like to recognise her, if possible, among the audience; and

as my friend knew where she was going to sit, she gave me a description of her appearance and dress, which would have enabled me to recognise her, had this lady occupied the place my friend knew she had taken. The description was — brown hair, worn plain, without flowers or jewels, brown eyes, pale blue velvet dress, gold ornaments, and a blue-and-gold fan. Not very distinct, after all, when you come to think of it, now that pale blue velvet is so fashionable; but true enough, when I looked at the place my friend had directed my attention to—the last seat but two, dress circle, right-hand side—I saw a lady who was watching the play intently, and whose appearance and dress entirely coincided with my friend's description—but the lady was not Mrs. Griswold.'

'Not Mrs. Griswold!' exclaimed Bryan Duval. 'How do you know?'

'Because,' returned Miss Montressor impressively, 'the face was the face of Mr. Foster's wife, as I saw it in the miniature

enclosed in the watch-cover; the hair and the eyes were quite unmistakable. That she was the woman who had sat for that miniature I cannot entertain the smallest doubt. It is Mrs. Foster, and therefore *not* Mrs. Griswold!'

Bryan Duval had listened to the latter part of Miss Montressor's narrative with intense, even painful, eagerness. It was evident that he attached immense importance to the apparently insignificant mistake made by Miss Montressor; a mistake easily to be explained on the theory that her friend had given her an erroneous indication of Mrs. Griswold's place in the house. Not so did Bryan Duval interpret it.

'You are quite sure,' he repeated, 'that you looked at the place where you were told to look for Mrs. Griswold?'

'I am quite sure.'

'You are quite sure that the lady you saw in that place bore a close resemblance to the miniature likeness of Mr. Foster's wife?'

'I am perfectly certain of it,' returned Miss Montressor; 'every feature and line was identical, and the peculiar unornamented mode in which the hair was dressed was a conclusive proof to my mind. Stay a moment,' she said, with a start like one catching at a suddenly suggested point, and laying her hand upon his arm, 'there is a curious coincidence in this. My friend told me that Mrs. Griswold had beautiful brown hair, in which she never wore any ornament.'

Bryan Duval rose, walked slowly up and down the room twice, and then returned to Miss Montressor's side. His face was very pale, and his voice sounded hoarsely, as he said to her:

'There is far more than ordinary villany in this atrocious murder, and perhaps the only way by which it can be exposed rests with you and with me. I think you will be discreet, and if it be necessary to ask you to take any part in this terrible matter, I

think you will consent to do so, and to act under orders.'

'Certainly,' replied Miss Montressor, looking considerably frightened. 'I wish you would explain what you mean, and what part in it can possibly fall to me.'

'I will explain,' said Bryan Duval. 'I fear I shall soon have to violate a dead man's confidence more extensively than by telling the story to you. Foster took, as you know, a great fancy to me, and even before that day when we went down to Richmond he had told me a great deal about himself; but his confidences with me took a different form from those in which he indulged on that day with you—they chiefly related to business matters. He told me what was the object of his journey to London—with which I need not trouble you, it has no immediate bearing on the case; he told me how unexpectedly and rapidly successful he had been in the accomplishment of that object, and that he had good hopes

of being able to return to New York at a much earlier date than that fixed at his departure. I remember that he did say he hadn't as yet announced to his wife that such a prospect had opened up to him, preferring to make quite sure rather than run the risk of keeping her in suspense, which might possibly end in disappointment. The details were rather complicated, and it struck me at the time that there was a good deal, not only of fair business competition, but of equivocal manœuvring to be apprehended in the carrying through of the enterprise. That it was by no means smooth sailing for Foster was particularly borne in upon me by one fact, which he communicated to me in the strictest confidence, now unhappily dispersed. It was this'—Bryan Duval now spoke in a whisper, and with great intentness—'he had come to England under a false name.'

Miss Montressor looked up wonderingly. 'Under a false name?' she repeated. 'His

name was not Foster? What was it, then?'

'I do not know,' returned Bryan Duval. 'But an awful surmise as to what it might have been came to me with your first words, when this horrid news was conveyed to us just now.'

'I don't understand you,' said Miss Montressor, with a somewhat confused and wondering look. She had not caught at the chain of probabilities which had presented itself to Bryan Duval.

'I have a horrible conviction,' said he, 'that Foster's name really was Griswold.'

'My God,' exclaimed Miss Montressor, moved to the exclamation by more feelings than the one which could be easily interpreted by her hearer, 'can it be?'

'It struck me in an instant, and every word that you have spoken has confirmed the suspicion. He told me that his wife had no notion that he had been obliged to assume a false name; he spoke of her to me

only casually—with great affection it is true—but my only distinct recollection of any quality which he assigned to her was a negative one: that she knew nothing about business, and that, therefore, he could not have told her that the assumption of a name not his own was a necessary precaution without alarming her. He had, not very wisely I thought at the time, kept her in ignorance of this detail, and arranged for her letters to him passing through the hands of a friend, who was to redirect them to him under his assumed appellation, known only to this friend. How well I recollect that the whole story struck me as the sort of thing which, had it occurred in a play or a book, would have been pronounced rather unnatural, and likely to involve so much confusion of detail as to hamper rather than aid business operations! How little I dreamt of such a complication as that which has arisen now! I do not think you see it?'

'I confess I do not,' said Miss Montressor.

'Well, it is simply this: the lady you saw in the theatre to-night was Mrs. Griswold, but none the less was she the original of the miniature which Mr. Foster showed you as that of his wife. The unhappy woman has no conception that the news with which all New York is ringing concerns her —that the murdered man is her husband.'

'I see it now, I see it now!' said Miss Montressor.

'You do not see it all even yet,' resumed Bryan Duval impressively. 'You don't see how it touches us. We two are the only people in this city who know the truth—we two are the only people on whom the task of making the truth known can possibly devolve, except, indeed, the friend through whom Foster received his wife's letters; and I know neither his name, his address, nor his business—I have, indeed, no clue whatever to him. The position of

this unfortunate man's wife is one of the most terrible and tragic that can be conceived. What is to be done?'

'What, indeed!' said Miss Montressor, whose mind, however, glanced rapidly towards her sister. 'I suppose you must communicate with the authorities.'

'Of course, of course!' said Bryan Duval. 'But I am not thinking so much of the public and official steps to be taken in this horrible affair; it is the wife, whose position, poor unconscious creature, is so very awful.'

To this Miss Montressor assented with ready sympathy, but it was agreed between them, as at that late hour nothing whatever could be done until the morning, there was nothing for it but that they should keep their own counsel. Bryan Duval impressed upon Miss Montressor the absolute necessity of appearing to be totally unconcerned in the matter, lest she should expose herself to indiscreet questioning by any member of

the party, which it had now become necessary they should rejoin.

'If I could avoid seeing them at all,' she said, 'it would be better, and, indeed, I hardly feel equal to the exertion. I cannot forget the face I saw to-night, so full of interest and delight, beaming with youth, beauty, and happiness; I cannot forget the pride and pleasure with which that poor fellow showed me its miniature presentment in the watch, which was his wife's parting gift. The two pictures will haunt me all night, and when the morn comes, what shall we do?'

'I do not know,' said Bryan Duval, 'what my part may have to be; I must be well advised in that matter; but one grand object would be to secure access to Mrs. Griswold. How well I remember poor Foster talking of the pleasure it would give his wife to make our acquaintance, and telling me that he could not give me a letter of introduction to her, because it might

lead to the leaking out, through some other members of the company, of the fact that they had known him as Mr. Foster. If the poor fellow had only made his confidence in me complete, if he had told me what was the real name which he had hidden under a false one, it might be easier for me now to help in this terrible calamity. There is no way of getting at Mrs. Griswold without startling her, if, indeed, we must be the persons to reveal the truth.'

'Perhaps we may devise one,' said Miss Montressor; 'but we must break up now. I am quite worn out.'

'Do not return to the supper-room at all,' said Bryan Duval; 'here is a side door by which you can get away. I will apologise for you, though, indeed, no apology is needed.'

During the conversation the hum of voices in the next room had been distinctly audible. The English actors had suddenly found themselves invested with a new im-

portance and interest in New York; the very latest intelligence of the murdered man was to be had from them; and when Bryan Duval returned, he found his companions the centre of an eager group, who were all listening with absorbed avidity to every detail which could be furnished by the party concerning their acquaintance with Mr. Foster. The telegraph had given accurate particulars of the place and time at which the murder had been committed, which had so immediately followed the farewell scene on board the Cuba, that every utterance of Mr. Foster's which could be retailed by his companions on that occasion was regarded and noted with all the impressiveness due to last words.

CHAPTER VII.

ONLY TOO TRUE.

Mr. Jacobs was as punctual as usual in his early attendance in the box-office of the Varieties on the morning after the first appearance of the Bryan Duval troupe, when he was lightly touched on the shoulder, and, turning round, was astonished to perceive the great London star himself.

'Ha, ha, my dear boy, it is you, is it?' cried Mr. Jacobs, with unctuous familiarity. 'Looking after business—always got an eye to the dollars—come down to see how the places are going? Well, you need not look so anxious about it; we're going right ahead, we are, this time.'

'It wasn't for that, Jacobs,' said Bryan, with a faint smile. 'I want to look at the

sheet for last night. I want to see what names certain places were taken in.'

'O, that's the game, is it?' said Mr. Jacobs, handing him the sheet required. 'Want to see whether any of your old flames came to welcome you back. Hallo! what's the matter?' he cried, as Duval uttered a short groan.

'Nothing,' said Bryan; 'nothing at all. As Jacobs looked up at him he saw his finger resting motionless on a certain portion of the box sheet. 'Thank you, I won't intrude upon you any more. Good-morning, Jacobs;' and he sauntered off.

'Mrs. Alston E. Griswold,' murmured Jacobs to himself, reading the name underneath which Bryan's finger had been fixed. 'That's it; there's the mark of his black glove on the sheet now. Alston Griswold? Why, that's the name of one of your Wall-street customers, with a fine up-town house and—ah, Bryan, my boy, your propensities will get you into mischief one of these days.'

'All doubt is at an end now,' said Bryan, as he walked up to the hotel, 'and Clara was right. The case seems to me even darker and worse than she seems to think at present. It is lucky that she has a head upon her shoulders, for I shall have to take her into consultation.'

Thereupon he despatched an elderly Irishman to Miss Montressor's room, with a message intimating his desire to be allowed access to her as soon as possible. Bryan Duval's messenger returned with an affirmatory answer to his inquiry whether Miss Montressor could let him see her; they had not yet met on that morning, and she was in a high state of expectation of what the interview might bring forth.

Miss Montressor had been thinking intently on the subject in discussion during all her waking moments since she and Bryan Duval had parted on the preceding night. It had not kept her from sleeping; her nerves were in too good order and her con-

stitution was too sound for her to be subjected to inconveniences of that sort by any abstract cause of emotion; but she had thought over it until she fell asleep, and it had recurred to her with her first consciousness on waking. She had endeavoured, in anticipation of Bryan Duval's possible line of interrogation, to recall everything that had been said during the conversation between herself and Mr. Foster on the terrace at Richmond, and, strangely as she considered it, she found this very difficult to do. If Miss Montressor had understood the laws of mental processes better, she would have known that this difficulty was of ordinary occurrence, and to be anticipated in her case. She was not in the habit of thinking about anything systematically, and a beginning in this direction is no easier than any other mental process directed with intention. So that Miss Montressor had got herself rather into a muddle between what had really been said by Mr. Foster and

her general impression of the interview, when she found Bryan Duval in the small ante-room in which the residents at the hotel usually received their friends.

Neither was insensible to the gravity and incongruity of the occasion. That two strangers, come to New York in the trifling and superficial character of actors, should be —to their own almost indubitable persuasion, and quite unsuspected by the public—able to supply the key of one of the most terrible mysteries of crime which had for a long time startled and disturbed society, was a circumstance full of oddity and interest that they appreciated to the full. Literally nothing could have influenced, impressed, surprised, or agitated Duval out of the instincts of the dramatist who combines, and the actor who reproduces, the situations supplied by human events. When this story should be complete in its reality, it would find its way to the pigeon-holes in which Bryan Duval's materials, the pabulum of his ever-

active brain, were stored up, with the regularity, in order and in date, of a privately edited edition of the *Annual Register*. In due, not in undue time—Bryan Duval was never so wanting in taste and judgment as to incur the charge of indecent haste—this drama of real life would no doubt be put upon the stage, with charming accessories of scenery, decoration, and padding-out. Bryan Duval saw his way to it already, though as yet the knowledge of the murderer and his motive were wanting to the story.

It had occupied his thoughts also almost exclusively; and though he had been trained to habits of mental precision, and the following of clues to human nature altogether beyond Miss Montressor's ken and capacity, he had not reached a much clearer state of mind than that in which his fair friend was about to join him. Bryan Duval was a man of too much natural keenness and too much acquired experience to accept generalities as bases for argument, or to seek con-

clusions in them. While he constructed a system with the skill and minuteness of a Procureur Impérial, he did not lend his judgment to one hypothesis, and turn the facts to fit it. Without ignoring or depreciating the influence of women in all human events, he regarded the 'Who is she?' which has become axiomatic as rather smart than sound, and was disposed to believe that dollars are quite as often to be found as women at the bottom of the crimes, as they assuredly are of the misfortunes, of men. In the present instance, if anything could be said to induce an explanation in the midst of the mystery of this crime, it was Bryan Duval's conviction that money was in question. Mr. Foster's private business in London; the disguise about his name, which he had avowed, but not explained; the perfectly conceivable rivalry and envy which his expedition might have excited—all these were plain to the mind of Bryan Duval as he pondered the matter, and they pointed

each and all to another conclusion than that of 'Who is she?' Of Mr. Foster, or, as he had almost come to name the murdered man in his thoughts, Alston Griswold, he had not known very much, and their term of acquaintance had been short; but it had sufficed to create a strong regard for him, and Bryan Duval had formed a pretty accurate estimate of the New York merchant's character.

'An honest, true-hearted fellow,' said Duval to himself, 'and profoundly in love with his wife, who seems to have been equally attached to him. There was no woman in this case—no woman on either side the Atlantic. The murderer must be looked for in the ordinary category of ruffians, or if it is a put-up job, the wire-puller is here in New York among his rivals in business.'

The scene and circumstances of the crime, imperfectly as they could be gathered from the newspaper reports, made a very vivid

picture to the mind's eye of the dramatist, accustomed to seize upon salient points; and he thought he discerned in them tokens of a surprise and a discovery, rather than of the common assault of a robber.

'Why should he have gone with any man into an empty warehouse?' Bryan Duval asked himself. 'May he not have been enticed thither by a promise of information of some kind? May he not have been suddenly set upon and murdered, because he refused to give certain information?'

The circumstance of Mr. Foster having lingered in Liverpool later than the departure of the train by which he mentioned to Duval it was his intention to return to London, did not make any impression upon the actor's mind.

'Business men have business matters to attend to in many places,' he thought. 'If the poor fellow strained a point a little in letting me suppose that he had nothing to do and nobody to see in

Liverpool, and only came down on our account, it was a harmless little bit of compliment, and I daresay he did. No man is bound to tell a far closer friend than I was *all* about any matter in which he is concerned, and this one may have had an extensive connection in Liverpool, and lots to do there for anything I know to the contrary. I have, to be sure, no very solid grounds for my belief; but it is certainly more than an impression that this poor fellow's business in England lies at the root of this matter, and that there is no woman in the case.'

The words were passing through his mind as Miss Montressor entered the room.

'You were only too right,' said Bryan Duval, as Miss Montressor entered the room with face full of inquiry: 'the lady who occupied the seat you described to me last night was indeed Mrs. Alston Griswold; here is the memorandum from the box-office, giving the name and address. This is cer-

tainty on one side of the question; certainty on the other will, I fear, be only too readily attained.'

Miss Montressor sat down and looked, as she felt, very much concerned. The condition of the unconscious wife appealed at once to her womanly and her artistic feelings; the truth and the situation alike struck her as deeply impressive.

'I shall communicate at once with the city authorities,' said Bryan Duval; 'it will be impossible for me to keep out of this sad affair, and it is manifestly my duty to volunteer all the information it is in my power to give. I suppose there will be some person who will be deputed to break this terrible news to her?'

'No, no,' said Miss Montressor; 'do not act in the matter in that way. What do the ends of justice matter in comparison with the wife who is widowed in such a horrible manner, and who knows nothing of the calamity which has befallen her? Let them

wait; let us first try to find some personal friend of the poor thing, and tell him.'

'Of course,' said Bryan Duval, 'that would be the proper line of action if we knew anything about a personal friend; but we must first discover the identity of a person of the sort, and how am I to do that except by communicating with the authorities? Very likely the officials with whom it will be my duty to confer may all, or some of them, be acquainted with Mrs. Griswold. Full particulars of the murder cannot be known until the arrival of the mail, and it is just possible that no suspicion may arise, unless I awaken it, that Mr. Foster is the well-known Mr. Griswold I now firmly believe him to be. To keep the knowledge of such a possibility from the police authorities here for a moment longer than it can be avoided may seriously impede action on the other side, as it must prevent the supplying of information from thence.'

Miss Montressor had listened to Bryan

Duval with a troubled countenance and an equally troubled heart. A line of action was suggesting itself to her, which had the full consent of her judgment and her feelings, but a consideration of self-interest was striving to withhold her from propounding it. She knew that the means of acquiring the information which would enable Bryan Duval to communicate direct with some acquaintance or friend of Mrs. Griswold's lay ready at her hand, but she hesitated to use it. Bess was that means—it would cost her something to avail herself of Bess. The struggle in Miss Montressor's mind was not lasting. The kindly remembrance of the man who had treated her with such gentlemanly consideration, with such unfeigned respect, a thought of the fair woman whom she had seen on the previous night and her pathetic ignorance, overcame her misgivings.

'I think,' she said, 'I can supply you with a hint which may change your view of the most judicious course for you to pursue.

Do you remember that I told you yesterday that I had a friend who knew Mrs. Griswold, and had given me indications by which I recognised her—or, as I thought, recognised Mrs. Foster—at the theatre?'

'Yes, I remember,' said Bryan Duval. 'How stupid I am not to have remembered it sooner! I suppose you can put yourself in communication with her?'

'Easily,' said Miss Montressor. 'She is'—here she hesitated for one last moment—'she is in a very humble station—no higher than that of nurse to Mrs. Griswold's child.'

'Capital,' said Bryan Duval, passing over the explanation with an absolute carelessness highly reassuring to Miss Montressor; 'nothing could be better. She is positively in the house, and knows all about them.'

'Well, she has only been in the house since Mr. Griswold's departure; but I have no doubt she can give us the information we require.'

'Can you get it from her?' said Bryan

Duval, in that curt business tone which Miss Montressor had come to know so thoroughly, and which had in it something extremely satisfactory to everybody who wanted to transact business with the man who spoke thus to the purpose.

'I can,' she replied, 'but it will be a little difficult to do without exciting suspicion and precipitating discovery, if indeed the discovery is to be made. I cannot send for her to come to me openly—such an invitation would astonish Mrs. Griswold, and she might meet it with an objection—neither can I go in my proper capacity to Mrs. Griswold's house to visit one of Mrs. Griswold's servants.'

'Why can't you go as a servant yourself?' said Bryan Duval. 'Your make-up in that line is unexceptionable; try it off the boards at once!'

'I will,' said Miss Montressor; 'that is a capital idea. I will go disguised, and discover whether the lady at the play really

was Mrs. Griswold. If I cannot see her, which I may manage to do by some contrivance, I shall at least be sure to see a portrait of her. A man like her husband was not likely to be satisfied with a mere miniature of his wife while a full-length portrait was to be had for money. We are, of course, morally certain that the fact is what we take it to be, but the first thing to be done is to achieve actual certainty. Taking it for granted that I see Mrs. Griswold and identify her with the miniature, what will you do next?'

'I cannot decide upon that until I have received your report,' said Bryan Duval, 'on these two heads—first, the identity of Mrs. Griswold with the portrait Mr. Foster showed you; secondly, the name and address of some intimate friend of the family, with whom I may at once communicate.'

'I am quite sure there is such a person,' interrupted Miss Montressor. 'I could not distinctly recall everything that Mr. Foster

told me, in the hurry and confusion of last night; but since then I have remembered a good deal. He mentioned to me, but not by name, one friend in particular, in whose charge he had confided not only his business interests in New York during his absence, but also his household treasures. Poor fellow, he quite amused me—though I am conscious now that I did not respond very warmly or graciously—by his simple talk about his wife and child. He would try to describe the baby to me, and he did describe the mother as well as showing me her picture. He was a good soul. But I quite remember now that he told me he had this trusty friend.'

'A piece of information which makes your suggestion all the more admirable and your aid all the more valuable. We now have some definite basis of action. When we discover this friend of Foster's, or Griswold's, we shall not only have found the man who will be our best guide as to what

we ought to do, but we shall have found the man who will be sure to hit upon the motive of the crime. And now lose no time. Set about your task at once; the sooner it is over, the better for you and for what I have to do. I do not say to you, do it well and do it delicately—that I feel is unnecessary. We have not had half sufficient time to realise how horrid this thing is which has happened; and so much the better, since it has so strangely fallen out that we have come to this side of the world to act in such a tragedy.'

Miss Montressor rose and was about to leave the room, when she said:

'Suppose by any possibility I should be wrong, and that this lady is not the original of the miniature, consequently that Mr. Griswold, her husband, is not the murdered man —what will you do in that case?'

'In that case,' said Bryan Duval, 'I shall simply have to communicate with the authorities the fact that Mr. Foster is not

the murdered man's real name; this on his own authority, and of course it will be immediately transmitted to London. Go now. You will find me here on your return; I shall not leave the house.'

Miss Montressor left him, and, going to her own room, made rapid preparation for the arduous task she had been set. She hurriedly turned over such articles of her wardrobe as had yet been unpacked, searching for those most suitable to the part she was to play. While doing this, her thoughts reverted to the last unprofessional masquerade in which she had indulged, and, by a natural transition, to Mr. Dolby. She had thought very little about him during her voyage out, but as it approached its termination she had occasionally speculated upon whether that gentleman would present himself at the wharf, or whether he would wait and pay her a more dignified visit at her hotel. She had actually spared him a few moments' recollection in all the triumph of

her first brilliantly successful appearance on the previous evening. 'Was Mr. Dolby in the house?' she had wondered. 'Was his hand among the number of those which had flung prodigal floral tributes at her feet? Or — was he sulky still?' She had, however, completely forgotten him from the announcement of the supper, and in all the hurry, agitation, and confusion of the ensuing hours of the night, her mind had never once glanced towards him. But now —she selected a plain gray skirt, originally intended to fulfil the once humble office of petticoat, but which was rather an unduly smart morning walking dress for the part she was assuming — she remembered the day on which she had gone to the house in Queen-street, and inquired ineffectually for her angry lover. Even now it was only a passing remembrance; her feelings were unaffectedly and deeply engaged in the matter in hand. Miss Montressor's wardrobe contained nothing suitable to be worn

as an out-door dress of the sort which she required; but she remedied the deficiency by putting on a thick dark shawl, which she found among the parcel of wraps, and removing the too conspicuous feather from her hat, over which she pinned a veil.

As she unfolded the shawl the sharp end of a pin caught her finger. 'How tiresome of Justine,' she muttered, 'to leave pins stuck in shawls! I have so often spoken to her about it;' and she turned over the folds of the garment to find the obnoxious object. It was a long gold pin with a carved head, rather intended for a gentleman's necktie than as a shawl fastener; the stone was a very fine specimen of intaglio work, and Miss Montressor looked at it without any recognition of whence it came. It was not hers; and as it was a very uncommon article, it was not the sort of thing to be picked up on the floor or anywhere, as people pick up ordinary pins. 'I wonder whose it is, and how I came by

it?' she thought, as she mechanically used it to fasten the shawl.

She then went quickly down the stairs, and passed out of the door, comparatively unnoticed. It was early in the day, and the customary groups of loungers had not yet assembled. On leaving the hotel, Miss Montressor turned to the right, and making inquiry of the first person whom she met as to the distance which divided her from that portion of Fifth-avenue in which Mrs. Griswold's house was situate, learned that she would be overtaken in about a minute by a street car, which would deposit her close by. She had barely thanked her informant when the car came up, and the man to whom she had spoken signalled to the conductor; the next moment Miss Montressor was making her first experience of the marvellously-convenient and well-arranged street locomotion of New York. As she seated herself, a sudden recollection flashed across her that the pin which she had been so sur-

prised to find in her shawl had belonged to Mr. Foster. With the suddenness of the vision, the little circumstance which had placed it in her possession returned to her memory—again she felt the slight chill of the evening air; she saw Mr. Foster's face, and felt his careful hands drawing the warm folds around her; remembering that he held them together with one hand, as he removed the pin from his own necktie with the other. How came she to have forgotten this pin—to have omitted returning it to him? It was a strange oversight. How curious and mysterious, should it be now destined to be an important coincidence! 'His wife will remember it,' she thought. 'If we are right in our terrible belief, my bringing it to her, my requesting her to identify it, will enable me to prove my sad story to the poor lady.' What was it Mr. Foster had told her about this pin? She must try to recollect all he had said very exactly; she must not add a word or sub-

tract a word if possible. He had said that it was a sleeve button that had belonged to his wife; that on his arrival in London he had found it among his things, where it had no doubt been put by accident, and that he had had it made into a pin—yes, that was exactly what he had said. She took out her pocket-book, and in the few minutes occupied by the transit she wrote down, with all the accuracy attainable by her memory, the words in which Mr. Foster had told her these facts.

She had hardly concluded the memorandum when she was set down, and in a few minutes found herself at the door of Mrs. Griswold's house. A good-humoured coloured servant answered the summons of the bell, and, on her inquiry for Mrs. Jenkins, ushered her into a small waiting-room on the right of the hall. Several newspapers lay upon the table; she turned them over hurriedly, and found in each great prominence given to the appalling murder

in Liverpool of an American gentleman. She had no time to read the details, which were afforded in every variety of type, and embellished with every device to attract curiosity and direct attention, for she was joined by her sister within a few moments. 'Civil people these,' she thought, in the way that people will think of trifles amid the most serious occupations of the mind; 'civil people these, to give a message to a servant with such celerity.'

'You see I have come to visit you, Bess, after all.'

Mrs. Jenkins received her sister with unbounded delight, but had hardly greeted her and recounted with what eloquent praises Mrs. Griswold had spoken of the performance, and especially of Clara's part in it, that morning, when she was helping to dress her, when she broke off to ask about the very subject which was occupying Miss Montressor's thoughts.

'My dear,' she said, 'of course you have heard of this horrible murder? It gave me

a dreadful turn last night, when I heard the boys crying out, about an hour after Mrs. Griswold went to the play, and Jim went out to find out all about it. Mrs. Griswold hadn't heard anything of it when she came in, and I was very glad; for really it is enough to make one nervous. You heard all about it, of course?'

'O, yes,' said Miss Montressor; 'we have heard all about it. It happened the very day after we sailed. Does every one know about it in the house now?'

'Of course,' said Mrs. Jenkins.

'I didn't mean to ask that,' said Miss Montressor; 'my mind is wandering. I meant to say, was Mrs. Griswold acquainted with Mr. Foster?'

'Lor' bless you! no, Clara,' said her sister, laughing. 'I think you Londoners imagine London is the only big place in the world, and think people who live anywhere else must know everybody who ever came from the place where they live. There are

lots of Fosters in New York, I should think, and there is not anything known about this poor gentleman except that his name is Foster. Mrs. Griswold saw it this morning, and she said she did not think Mr. Griswold knew any one of the name; but it made her quite downhearted—set her off thinking of Mr. Griswold, I suppose.'

'Well, I am glad she hadn't heard it before she left the theatre,' said Miss Montressor; 'it isn't pleasant news to wind up the evening with, even when one knows nothing at all of the parties concerned, a dreary epilogue to the play. I saw Mrs. Griswold last night, Bess.'

'I am glad you did. What do you think of her—though I suppose you couldn't judge very well at that distance?'

'Well, in the first place, I should like to be sure that it was Mrs. Griswold. People change places occasionally, you know, at the theatre, and I didn't catch sight of her until the third act, nor see her very dis-

tinctly then; but I could make out the gown, and that she wore gold ornaments of the new fashion—warming-pan style, all clink and clatter when you are near them, and very like harness when you are not. I saw the blue-and-gold fan, too; so I suppose there is no doubt that was the lady?'

'No doubt at all,' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'She was in the seat I told you to look at, and said how comfortable it was, and what a capital view of the stage she had from it. She was highly delighted, I can tell you, Clara, and said she liked your acting better than any she had ever seen. I told her it was not your best part, that it was nothing to your Juliet; but she said she was afraid she was too stupid to care about Shakespeare—not that she is stupid. I am sure I don't set myself up for a judge, but I think she is as bright as she is pretty.'

'I don't exactly know whether she is pretty or not,' said Miss Montressor, 'and I take a great interest in your Mrs. Griswold:

a lady who is so kind to her dependents as you make her out to be, and has the good sense and the good taste to be an admirer of the drama, is a legitimate subject of interest. I am sorry I did not see her face more distinctly; could you give me a sight of her now?'

'Now,' said Mrs. Jenkins, 'and in that dress, Clara! What would she think?'

'Why, my dear Bess, you do not imagine I want you to introduce me as Miss Montressor in this costume, and thus deliberately tell on myself the very thing which I have been impressing upon you must be kept profoundly secret? Not at all. But nursery visitors are not impossibilities in a house of this sort, I suppose? Couldn't I be a humble friend, a former fellow-servant somewhere—I suppose she thinks you were a servant before you came to her—who has just dropped in to have a look at baby?'

Mrs. Jenkins laughed. 'It would be good fun to have a private play of that sort on

our own account, Clara, but unfortunately it cannot be done, for Mrs. Griswold is not in the nursery, and she is not likely to come to it. She caught cold last night at the play, and I could not persuade her not to get up this morning; but she felt very tired after breakfast, and I did persuade her to go and lie down: she is lying down in her own room, and the orders are that she is not to be disturbed for anything less important than a cable message from Mr. Griswold. She is always expecting one, though, as far as I can see, he is too sensible to waste money in them, and satisfies himself with writing by the mail—precious long letters they are, and doesn't she prize them just! However, she is lying down, and I cannot disturb her, above all by taking a stranger into the room; so you cannot see her at present.'

'O, never mind,' said Miss Montressor; 'so much the better that she is in the room. I shall have plenty of chances of seeing her.

And now I should like a look at the house, Bess. It is the first house I have been in in New York, and I have a fancy for that sort of thing, and I like to get hints about carpets and curtains and drawing-room fixings. Can't you take me round—it is allowed, I suppose?'

'O, certainly, it is allowed,' said Mrs. Jenkins; 'we are under no restraint here. Come along up-stairs;' and the unsuspecting woman led Miss Montressor up the broad staircase to the white-and-gold folding-doors which gave access to the reception-rooms.

'What a simple creature it is,' thought Miss Montressor, 'that it has never occurred to her to ask me why I have so decidedly changed my mind as to come here to see her, that being the very exact thing which I so positively assured her yesterday I could not do! Very handsome rooms, indeed,' she said aloud; 'fitted up in capital taste, and evidently quite regardless of expense. That's a fine picture on the wall opposite.'

She stepped across the floor rapidly, and stood still in front of it. It was a fine picture; an admirably executed portrait of Helen Griswold. The artist had painted her in an unconventional attitude, and the whole picture was pleasing to the general eye, interested in the work of art rather than in the likeness. It represented a slight, almost girlish figure, in soft white muslin robes slightly trimmed with lace, touched here and there with a knot of ribbon, a lace veil being loosely tied over the rich chestnut-brown hair, softening its masses, but hiding neither its richness nor its colour; the hands were clad in gardening-gloves; in the right was a large pair of scissors, just about to be applied to a rose-bush, one blossom of which was held apart from the stem by the left; a basket of roses already cut stood at the feet, and the scene of the picture was a conservatory, the original of which Miss Montressor had caught a glimpse of on the first floor of the house.

'That is Mrs. Griswold's portrait,' said Mrs. Jenkins, in reply to her sister's observation, 'and it is not at all flattered; so now you can see, if you had got a near view of her last night, you would have agreed with me about her beauty.'

'Yes,' said Miss Montressor slowly, 'that is a pretty face, and one cannot say of it, as one does of so many pretty faces, that there is nothing in it. I should think she was a very sensible woman, as well as a very kind-hearted one?'

'She is just that,' said Mrs. Jenkins enthusiastically. 'Sit down here, Clara, and have a good look at it.'

The sisters placed themselves side by side upon an ottoman which commanded a good view of the portrait, at which Miss Montressor continued steadfastly to gaze. All doubt was over now, all hope that she had been mistaken was at an end; the miniature she had seen in the watch that day as she paced the terrace at Richmond was but a

reduced copy without the veil, and the face that looked mildly, beaming down upon her out of its gilded frame, was as fresh and fair as the roses in the basket at the woman's feet. Miss Montressor was not of a classic turn of mind; her education had not gone far in any direction, nor at all in that; she did not refer the suggestiveness of the open scissors in the woman's hand, about to snip the fresh young life of the beautiful rose, to any recollection of the Parcæ; but it had a certain something in it which impressed her, something of suspicion which filled her eyes with tears unseen by Mrs. Jenkins.

'Is there a portrait of Mr. Griswold?' she asked.

'Only a small one, half-sized, and since he went away Mrs. Griswold has had it moved to her bedroom. It hangs on the wall just over her dressing-table, and opposite the foot of her bed. It is the first thing she must see in the morning when she opens her eyes. They say it is uncom-

monly like him; it is painted by the same artist who did this one; but Mrs. Griswold will have it the picture in her bracelet—much handsomer and much younger—is more like Mr. Griswold.'

'Does any one of her family stay with her while he is away?' was Miss Montressor's next question.

'There is not any family. She has no relatives, I am told, not only in New York, but in all the world; she was an orphan when Mr. Griswold married her, and I do not believe he has any relatives; for I have never seen any nor heard them spoken of, either by her or among the servants.'

'That's lonely for Mrs. Griswold. Has she much company while he is away? But I think you said not yesterday?'

'O dear, no; she leads the quietest life that any lady could live. Many a one would think it very dull; but she doesn't, what with her books, and music, and baby, and her letters to Mr. Griswold. She is

sometimes sorrowful, but never dull. She has some visitors at times, but I don't think she cares for them—one person is pretty much the same to her as another, when it is not Mr. Griswold—and one day she said to me, "I have no intimates, and my husband has very few for so wonderfully sociable a man, and such a general favourite as he is."'

'Then there is no one to take care of her in particular?' said Miss Montressor; 'for she is young, you know, to be left alone with so much to look after and to do as there must be in the care of all this,'—with a comprehensive sweep of her arm, intended to take in all the household goods at once.

'O, no, there is no one to take care of her,' said Mrs. Jenkins; 'but she can take very good care of herself. She always wishes to do, and she always does, what is right and good and kind towards every one.'

Miss Montressor was profoundly dis-

couraged. Her embassy was not prospering; the worst that they feared was true, and the aid on which they had speculated did not seem to be forthcoming. Mrs. Griswold had no relatives and no intimates. Mr. Griswold had no relatives, and if he had any intimates, Mrs. Jenkins could evidently give no information concerning them. What was to be done now? Miss Montressor dared not pursue her questioning of her sister any further, and hastily decided that the best thing she could do would be to return to the hotel and narrate to Bryan Duval exactly what had passed. She felt that her mission was but imperfectly executed; but its solemnity and importance had grown upon her with every moment since she had entered Mrs. Griswold's house, and she was now strongly actuated by a nervous desire to get out of it as soon as possible. She looked at her watch and started up in a hurry.

'I must be going, Bess,' she said; 'I had

no notion it was so late. I am overdue at rehearsal, and here I have stayed talking about other people, and not said anything of all I wanted to say to you. Come along down-stairs with me.'

'You will come again, Clara?' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'Nobody will ever suspect you in that gown and with that great shawl—it spoils your figure, dear, but never mind.'

'I will try,' said Miss Montressor, 'I will see about it; if not, you can come to me. Good-bye now.'

Mrs. Jenkins had come to the door with her; the hall was empty as the sisters spoke their last few words there. Mrs. Jenkins's hand was upon the lock of the street door when the bell was rung. She mechanically drew back the lock, and a gentleman presented himself. He was a young man, tall, slight, and upright, with bright black eyes and dark complexion, fine curly black hair, and a dark moustache.

'Is Mrs. Griswold at home?' he said.

'She is at home, sir,' said Mrs. Jenkins, 'but she is very tired and not very well, and she is lying down.'

'O, then,' said the stranger, passing into the hall, 'I will content myself with a visit to your quarters, Mrs. Jenkins, and a look at the baby.' He had lifted his hat to Miss Montressor, who by this time was on the outside of the door. 'And,' he now added, 'I will just write a line in the waiting-room before you take me upstairs, Mrs. Jenkins, and ask you to give it to Mrs. Griswold when she awakes.' The sisters parted with a wave of the hand, and Mrs. Jenkins shut the door.

Miss Montressor walked slowly and thoughtfully down the street. She felt sure that the gentleman whom she had just seen, and who spoke so familiarly to her sister, must be at least an intimate acquaintance of Mrs. Griswold's—the early hour of his visit, his familiar manner, the fact that he was going to be taken up to see the child,

the very tone of her sister's voice as she answered his question, all indicated that he was no stranger. Bess had said Mrs. Griswold had no intimate friends. Perhaps she had forgotten this one, or the intimacy might be between him and Mr. Griswold. From that, may be, Miss Montressor felt instinctively that here was a resource—an instrument put into her hands. There could be no risk in the using of it.

By the time she had arrived at this conclusion she was well out of sight from the windows of Mrs. Griswold's house; but no one could leave that house and turn to either side without her perceiving the fact. She crossed the street and waited on the opposite side. She was quite alone, as it happened, throughout its long length, and might pass slowly back and forward a few steps in each direction without attracting attention.

The minutes during which she was thus engaged seemed very long to Miss Montressor. Would Bryan Duval approve of

what she was going to do? It might be a great blunder; it might be the best thing under the circumstances. She was forced to use her discretion in the matter; there seemed the one way in which she could fulfil the promise with which she had left Duval. After an interval of at least a quarter of an hour the door of Mrs. Griswold's house opened, and the young man for whom Miss Montressor was watching appeared on the threshold, attended by the coloured servant, to whom he was speaking pleasantly, and who was receiving a communication with the most expressive grin. In another moment he came down the steps, and advanced briskly in the same direction which she had taken. She stood perfectly still until he was nearly opposite to her. Then she crossed the street rapidly, went up to him, and, without giving herself a moment to consider, said:

'You are a friend of Mrs. Griswold's? In her interest may I speak with you?'

CHAPTER VIII.

THORNTON CAREY.

THORNTON CAREY, who was much surprised at this sudden address, stopped, hesitated, and looked somewhat embarrassed. Another man, accustomed to what are called 'adventures,' would not have been in the least thrown off his balance, either by the suddenness or the style of the address; he would have accepted it as a matter of course, and done his best to make himself pleasant to the speaker. Thornton Carey, however, was not this style of man, and, even if he had been, there was something in the earnestness of Miss Montressor's voice and manner which would have stopped his flippancy. Had she not, moreover, mentioned the name of Helen, and declared

herself to be about to speak in Mrs. Griswold's interests? That would have been quite enough at any time to command Thornton Carey's sympathy and attention.

'I am a friend of Mrs. Griswold's,' he replied, looking keenly at his interlocutor, 'and, for the matter of that, of Mr. Griswold's too, I hope.'

'What I have to say concerns them both most nearly,' said Miss Montressor, frankly meeting his gaze. 'Will you, in the exercise of your friendship for them, trust me so far as to accompany me in a carriage to the Fifth-avenue Hotel?'

Again Thornton Carey hesitated. He went very little into female society, and, under any other circumstances, the idea of being shut up in a carriage with a strange lady would certainly have frightened him; and again he suffered himself to be persuaded by Miss Montressor's manner and the object of her mission.

'I will do so willingly,' he said; and

ordering the coachman to drive to the hotel, he entered the vehicle, and took his place by his fair companion's side.

As they drove through the crowded streets, Thornton Carey thought with wonder upon his strange position. Here was he, the hermit, the recluse, who so seldom emerged from his lettered seclusion far away in the city of the South, who seldom sought for any company beyond that of the distinguished dead who gathered around him as he pored over his books—here he was, rattling over the stones of New York, bound for the most luxurious hotel in the city, and with a very handsome, dashing young woman by his side. In the course of the desultory reading which, like most young men, he had indulged in before permanently settling down to valuable study, he had, he remembered, come across the description of certain adventures, such as he was then going through; and the idea that he, whom all his coevals looked upon as a

model of sageness and sobriety, should be found under such circumstances, would have amused him, had he not at the same time remembered that the errand on which he was bound was, according to his companion's words, one in which Helen's happiness was deeply interested.

The carriage stopped at the ladies' entrance of the hotel, and Miss Montressor, on being handed out by Thornton Carey, requested him to follow her. They passed up the staircase to the first floor, and finding one of the smaller parlours disengaged, his companion requested Mr. Carey to be seated, while she sent one of the servants to call Mr. Bryan Duval.

'Bryan Duval!' echoed Carey in astonishment. 'Why, surely that is the name of a famous actor? Even I, though not much given to dramatic literature or theatre-going, have heard of him.'

'It is the same,' said Miss Montressor.

'But how can he be mixed up in any

matter concerning Mrs. Griswold?' asked Carey.

'It is as much in his power as in mine,' said Miss Montressor, 'to give information upon a subject in which Mrs. Griswold is most deeply and most unhappily interested.'

'Unhappily!' interrupted Thornton Carey, turning pale.

'Most unhappily, as you will agree when you know all,' said Miss Montressor. 'Here, however, is Mr. Duval; he will explain matters to you much better than I can.'

She introduced the gentlemen, and was pleased to notice that, so far as she could see, each liked the look of the other's appearance. Duval was pleased with Thornton Carey's frank honest expression, while Carey himself recognised the keen acumen and subtle intelligence displayed in the broad brow and bright eyes of the dramatist.

Miss Montressor commenced the conversation by rapidly explaining to Duval,

so far as she thought necessary, and without, of course, any allusion to Bess, the failure of her mission to Mrs. Griswold's house, adding that she there had met Mr. Carey, and learning that he was an intimate friend of the family, she had thought it best to ask his kind assistance, and had brought him there in order that the matter might be explained to him.

'You have acted perfectly right, my dear Miss Montressor,' said Bryan, avoiding his usual familiarity, under the idea that it would prove surprising, if not displeasing, to their new ally. 'And now, sir,' he added, turning to Carey, 'I will keep you no longer in suspense. You have, of course, heard of this terrible murder of the American gentleman in Liverpool, the news of which is ringing through all New York.'

'I have indeed,' replied Carey; 'and though the victim, whose name I believe was Foster, was personally unknown to me, the fact of his being a stranger, apparently

without friends or connections at the scene of the assassination, seems to render the tragedy doubly dreadful.'

'That he had no friends or relatives at the scene of the murder is, I have no doubt, perfectly true,' said Bryan Duval; 'but I have too much reason to believe, not merely that his name was not Foster, but, from what we now learn, that he was an intimate friend of yours.'

'Good God!' cried Thornton Carey, upon whom a light suddenly broke. 'And you say that Helen Griswold is also deeply interested in the matter? You cannot imagine for an instant—' and he stopped, for his voice suddenly failed him.

'I do not merely imagine,' said Bryan Duval, speaking deliberately, 'but in my own mind I no longer entertain any doubt that the man, the news of whose murder has caused such a shock in New York society, was Mr. Griswold, the husband of the lady whom you went to see this morning.'

'It is too terrible,' said Thornton Carey, covering his face with his hands. 'You seem to speak with certainty. Mr. Griswold was in Europe—might have been in Liverpool at the very time—and yet why this assumption of a false name?'

'That is exactly what we want you to explain to us,' said Bryan quickly; 'but before you attempt to do so, let me explain to you as shortly as possible the story of my acquaintance with Griswold, and the reason I have for coming to this sad conclusion.'

Then Bryan Duval succinctly, and in as few words as possible, sketched the story of their acquaintance with Griswold in London—narrated the particulars of the Richmond dinner, the conversation which the unfortunate man had had with Miss Montressor, the devoted manner in which he had spoken of his wife, and in which he had exhibited her portrait set in the watch; the melancholy which had overcome him at

Liverpool at the knowledge that they were about to proceed to New York, while his business must detain him some little time longer in England; told him, in fact, the whole story, without concealment or curtailment, down to Miss Montressor's recognition of the lady in the stalls on the previous evening as the original of the portrait which the so-called Mr. Foster had shown her, and the terrible dread which had then fallen upon her and Duval, that the murdered man was Mr. Griswold, who, for some object of his own unknown to them, had chosen, while away from home, to pass under an assumed name.

'But what that object was,' said Bryan Duval, in conclusion, 'we want you to tell us.'

After a pause of a few minutes, during which he had remained buried in abstraction, Thornton Carey spoke. 'You have given me a task which I am quite unable to fulfil,' he said, shaking his head. 'There

is probably no man in the world who understands so little of business, by which I mean commercial matters, as myself. Mr. Griswold never spoke to me about them, and if he had I should have been unable to understand them; and, fond of me as I am sure he was, I should have been one of the last persons in the world to whom he would have made any business confidence.'

'You believe, then,' said Bryan Duval, 'that this taking of an assumed name was really done for business purposes?'

'I have not the least doubt of it,' said Thornton Carey earnestly.

'I am myself inclined to that belief,' said Bryan. 'There was a singular frankness and honesty about the man, and the way in which he spoke about his wife, both to myself and Miss Montressor here, was evidently genuine; though,' he continued, with a touch of that worldly cynicism which sometimes came upon him, as it were, in spite of himself, 'these are matters in which

one must never be led away by what one either sees or hears. There are men who love their wives very deeply, and who yet, when away from them, urged on by vanity or passion, or whatever they may choose to call it—'

'I know what you would say,' said Thornton Carey, holding up his hand, 'and I suppose, as regards the generality of men, you are right. But, believe me, this was not the case with Alston Griswold—his was not a mere mouth worship of his wife; no other woman, be she who she might, would have been able for an instant to make him forget her whom he so dearly loved.'

'I believe you, Mr. Carey,' said Bryan, 'and in any case I honour you for your championship; but in this case I think you are right. From the little I saw of him, I have no doubt that your friend was all you say. We will allow, then, that he dropped his own name and called himself Foster for the furtherance of certain business transac-

tions. To obtain anything like a clue to this murder, it is necessary for us to know what those business transactions were, and whence this necessity for concealment arose; until we can obtain that, we shall still be in the dark as to the motives of the murderer.'

'I cannot help you,' said Thornton Carey, shaking his head ruefully. 'As I said before, I only knew Mr. Griswold in his domestic capacity as my friend, and the word business was never even mentioned between us.'

'You may yet be able to help us,' said Miss Montressor, leaning forward. 'This unfortunate Mr. Foster—Mr. Griswold as we must now think of him—told me that evening in the garden at Richmond that he had an intimate friend and confidant in New York, to whom during his absence he had not merely intrusted the conduct and supervision of his affairs and correspondence, but he had also placed his wife in this man's

charge. Now, knowing the Griswolds as you do, you will probably be able to tell us if there is any man who stood in this relation with them, and if so, what is his name?'

'This declaration goes further to corroborate your idea that the murdered man was indeed poor Griswold,' said Thornton Carey, with a sigh. 'There was a man exactly fulfilling those functions, who was understood to be a sort of partner of Griswold's in certain matters, and from whom he was never separated. I did not know that he carried the intimacy into his domestic life, and, indeed, I should have thought the person I mean was one for whom Mrs. Griswold would have had but little liking.'

'What was the name?' asked Duval eagerly.

'His name was Warren—Trenton Warren,' replied Carey. 'He was a man much thought of for his foresight and acuteness

in commercial matters, and he had an office down town in Broad-street, not far from Griswold's own place of business.'

'The thing to be done, then, is to see this Mr. Warren at once,' said Bryan Duval. 'If we prove to him, as we shall be able to do, that we were friends of Mr. Griswold's, he will doubtless be able to clear up the whole mystery of the change of names.'

'Even in this we are baffled for the time being,' said Thornton Carey. 'I heard accidentally that Mr. Warren was at Chicago.'

'Is that far distant?' asked Miss Montressor.

'Thirty-six hours' journey at least,' said Duval; 'and being, as I understand, essentially a man of business, Mr. Warren might not be able to leave at once, however earnestly we might venture to recall him.'

'You would be right, under ordinary circumstances,' said Thornton Carey; 'but I think if you were to let him know that it

was of great importance that Mrs. Griswold should see him at once, he would return.'

'And what shall we say to him when he comes?' asked Miss Montressor.

'Rather what shall he say to us?' said Carey. 'Mixed up as he is with Griswold's affairs, he will be able to see at a glance to whose interest it would be that this unfortunate man should be unfairly gotten rid of.'

'You seem disposed to take my view of this affair, Mr. Carey,' said Bryan Duval: 'that robbery was not the motive cause for this murder, but some ulterior object.'

'Unquestionably,' said Carey, 'robbery was not the object, because, if the papers be correct, the unfortunate man's watch and money were left undisturbed. Some other motive, doubtless connected with the business which took him on his fatal journey, and which he was at such pains to keep secret—perhaps even dictated from this

side of the water—must be at the bottom of it.'

'Your views coincide exactly with mine,' said Bryan Duval. 'It is useless for us, however, further to speculate on this matter, more especially since we know nothing at all approaching certainty, until Mr. Warren helps us with his experience. The one thing that confronts us and that cannot be blinked at is, that no matter from what reason or other the poor fellow has been murdered, the fact, sooner or later, must be broken to his wife.'

'That is what I feel so deeply,' said Carey. 'There is a mail from Europe due to-morrow; she will know of its arrival; and after that the truth can no longer be kept from her.'

'All that will remain, then, for us,' said Bryan, 'will be to break it to her in the most delicate manner possible, and it is most lucky that we have found you to aid us in that difficult task.'

'I will do my best most willingly,' said Carey; 'and after I have settled upon the matter, I may be of some use. At present, I confess that the news has come upon me so suddenly, my obligation to this unfortunate gentleman is so great, and my regard for him and his wife so essentially a portion of my life, that I cannot trust myself to give anything like clear advice or reliable aid.'

'I perfectly comprehend your feelings,' said Bryan Duval, 'and there is no need for us to prolong this painful interview—in fact, Miss Montressor and myself have our duties to attend to at the theatre, and we must go to them. We may, however, rely upon you to take the one step immediately necessary—namely, to apprise Mr. Warren by telegraph that his presence is most desirable in New York.'

'You may depend upon my doing so,' said Carey, 'and upon my being here to-morrow to take my part in any further consultation.'

So they parted.

Thornton Carey was completely overwhelmed by the news he had just heard. He would have disbelieved it, but he was never in the habit of allowing his common sense to be over-ridden by his sympathies; and that rare and inestimable quality told him that Mr. Bryan Duval had, indeed, good foundation for the deductions he had drawn. The more he thought over it, the less real doubt had he that the *soi-disant* Foster and his friend and benefactor, Alston Griswold, were one. He knew that Griswold's one idea in life had been to achieve such a fortune as would enable him to vie with the proudest millionaire in New York, and to retire altogether from business. It was evident that, in this endeavour, he had gone in for some great stake; so great as to require the exercise of what in the commercial world is known as tact, but in free-spoken circles, outside the commercial world, is called duplicity. This

change of name, for instance—it could be easily learned whether the secret had been confided to Warren alone, or was known to the clerks in Griswold's house of business —that could be learned from the clerks themselves; and Thornton Carey determined at once to inquire of them.

Wall-street, hot, rushing, and demented as usual; closing hour just at hand, and everybody anxious to make a few hundred or thousand more dollars before returning up-town for the day; telegraphs ticking from attic to basement in each of the enormous houses between Canal-street and Bowling-green; messengers rushing about in frantic haste, and the bar at Delmonico's at the corner of Chambers-street actually for five minutes without an occupant. Hustled on all sides, and swayed hither and thither by the fluctuating crowd, Thornton Carey at last made his way into Griswold's office. Telegraph instrument madly clicking in one corner, and white serpents

winding out from it and covering the floor with their tortuous folds; clerks running races with the telegraph instrument, and endeavouring to drown its noise with the scratching of their pens over the paper; men in shiny hats tumbling in and out, and adding to the general confusion.

After some delay, Thornton Carey was recognised by one of the principal clerks, who vouchsafed him three minutes' conversation. 'Mr. Griswold still in Europe; hoped he would be back very shortly; should be able to say more to-morrow, as letters were expected by the morning mail, giving the date of his return.'

Plainly everybody there was wholly unconscious of any evil having befallen the head of the establishment. 'That argued nothing,' Thornton Carey thought to himself, 'save that Griswold had placed no confidence in his servants.' He must try Warren's office next.

Being a partner of Mr. Griswold's,

Trenton Warren had the use of the clerks and appliances of his friend's office. For his own particular service he kept but one quiet, silent, trustworthy individual, who looked up when Carey entered, and in reply to his inquiry, announced that Mr. Warren was at Chicago. 'I forward his letters to him every day,' said the man, 'and if you have anything to send, it can go with my lot.'

Thornton Carey reflected for a moment.

'No, thank you,' he said; 'my business is important, and I must wire Mr. Warren at once. What is his address?'

'Three Bryan's Block, Chicago, will find him,' said the clerk, and immediately whirled round on his stool to continue his writing.

On Thornton Carey leaving Warren's office, he stepped at once into the Western Union Telegraph, and sent the following message:

'Trenton Warren, 3 Bryan's Block, Chicago.—I most earnestly request you to come to New York without delay ; it is of the utmost importance that I should see you ; a great calamity has occurred.

'HELEN GRISWOLD.'

'Now we must trust to Providence for the rest,' said Thornton Carey, as he walked away.

Having despatched the telegram, Thornton Carey returned to Mrs. Griswold's house, to which he was admitted by Jim. He ascertained from Mrs. Jenkins and from Helen's maid that there was not any danger of her proposing to go out when she should leave her room. On this point he was extremely anxious. He knew it would have been impossible for her to have passed a street corner, any public building, or any group of talkers without seeing the announcement of the latest news from England of the murder which was occupying

the attention of every intelligent person in New York at that moment, or hearing it discussed. It was everything to those who were now engaged in considering how best the awful truth should be broken to the unconsciously bereaved woman, that no uneasiness should be created in her mind through any indirect source.

'You are quite sure,' Thornton Carey asked of Mrs. Jenkins, 'that she has not ordered the carriage for this afternoon?'

'I am quite sure,' returned Mrs. Jenkins. 'About an hour ago she sent a note down to Mrs. Villiers to excuse herself from a dinner engagement for to-day, which was made at the play last night; and, indeed, I should not be surprised if she did not leave her room all day—her cold is very heavy.'

It was impossible that Thornton Carey could have thus questioned the two women servants without exciting some suspicion, some uneasiness in their minds. He saw

very plainly that he had done so, and he thought he might just venture to give them a hint of the origin of the caution, to endeavour to impress it upon them, and thereby render them more certain to observe it.

'I daresay you wonder,' he continued, 'why I am so anxious to know about Mrs. Griswold's probable movements of to-day; and, as I am sure I may trust you, and that you are both faithful friends to her'—the women exchanged looks with each other, and each bestowed an inquiring nod upon Thornton Carey, while they drew closer to him in their eagerness—'I will tell you that there is a rumour of an accident having occurred in England, in which it is just possible that Mr. Griswold may have been injured.'

'A railway accident, sir?' the two women exclaimed simultaneously.

'No,' he answered, with some confusion, 'not a railway accident; it is, I believe, a

case of supposed malicious injury. I cannot enter into the particulars now. I am not, indeed, fully aware of them. As soon as I am, and that I know for certain whether Mr. Griswold is or is not injured, I will tell you. In the mean time, you will understand that it is of immense importance that Mrs. Griswold should not be alarmed. If what we fear is true, she must know it soon enough. If it is not true, it will be most cruel to subject her to the excitement and suspense of knowing anything about it until all is known. I want you, Mrs. Jenkins, and you, Annette,' addressing Helen's maid, 'to make me the same promise that I have also secured from Jim.'

'I will do anything you wish, sir,' said Mrs. Jenkins; 'and I am sure Annette will say the same.'

'Mais oui, mais oui,' assented Annette eagerly.

'Well, then, you promise to be very cautious in your own manner, looks, and

speech—not to let Mrs. Griswold hear you talking to one another in any unusual way; not to go into her room with frightened faces, or with anything in your look which could lead her to think that this day is different from any other day in any respect. Will you promise me to keep a perpetual watch over yourselves, and to remember that all we want is a few hours' interval, during which I and other friends of Mrs. Griswold's may be quite sure that no one will be allowed to see her who can talk to her about the distressing rumour which has just reached New York, and yet that she will not suspect that any such watchfulness is being observed?'

Again he received assuring nods from the two women.

'I must also beg you,' he continued, 'to be very particular to keep every newspaper out of your mistress's sight until after the next time I shall have been here; make any excuse and every excuse that comes in

your heads, but don't permit her to get hold of a single evening paper or any morning paper of to-day. I hope none have found their way to her room this morning?'

'No, I think not,' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'You haven't seen any newspapers about, Annette?'

'No,' Annette replied; 'madame had not asked for any newspapers, and she had taken none up to her.'

'You need not be frightened on that point,' said Mrs. Jenkins; 'for I never saw a lady with so little curiosity about news as Mrs. Griswold. She reads the weeklies sometimes, when they are all about books and interesting things that are happening in the world; but I have known her go a whole week without looking into a daily; and we will keep them out of her way, if by any perverse chance she should take it into her head to want to see them. She is not given to scolding, but I daresay Jim

would not mind taking a scolding from her for not having thought of fetching an evening paper, if it is for her.'

'Don't make yourself uneasy, sir; not but what we should like to have a look at what they say.'

'They don't say anything,' said Thornton Carey; 'at least, they have not said it yet. The news has come by private cable message, and I am only afraid of its getting into the later editions. I shall be here to-morrow early, and implicitly trust you in this matter. There is another thing, too, you will have to be very careful about, if you please.'

'Certainly, sir,' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'What is that?'

'It is just possible that a telegram may come, directed to Mrs. Griswold.'

'From Europe, sir?'

'No,' said Thornton Carey; 'from Chicago.'

Mrs. Jenkins started slightly, and said:

'Chicago! Is there anything wrong there?'

'O, no, there is nothing wrong; only Mrs. Griswold has been sending a message on business to a friend of Mr. Griswold's, and it is better, until we are sure that Mr. Griswold is all right, that she should not see the answer. Will you therefore, Mrs. Jenkins, undertake, if this telegram should come, to have it sent at once to me at the Fifth-avenue Hotel? You need not be alarmed at undertaking the responsibility—the giving the message to one to whom it is not addressed. I can give you my word of honour for that, and you will know why almost as soon as I do. I cannot tell you more just now, because I do not know more.'

'I will have the message sent, sir,' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'Up to what hour shall you expect it?'

'I mean to remain at the hotel all day —at least until it comes,' said Thornton

Carey. 'There is an almost absolute certainty that it will come.'

'There will be no difficulty about it, sir,' said Mrs. Jenkins; 'but may I ask you if we are to be as particular about letters as about telegrams and newspapers?'

'Certainly,' said Thornton Carey; 'my injunctions refer to every kind of communication which could possibly reach Mrs. Griswold between this time and my next visit.'

'I don't see how we are to manage that, sir,' said Mrs. Jenkins. 'She doesn't mind about newspapers, and she does not expect any telegrams from any part of the States; but she will be looking out for English letters in the morning—they ought to be in—and it won't be possible, I am afraid, to keep her quiet then, to prevent her coming down-stairs, or to hide the letters from her, if they come. What are we to do in that case?'

'It will not matter about English let-

ters,' he replied. 'Any she could get to-morrow morning must have been written before the accident which is reported, so you need not trouble about that; besides, I will be here almost as soon as the mail can be delivered.'

He received an earnest assurance from the two women that all his requests should be scrupulously observed, and he left the house feeling that, as far as human precaution could be taken towards securing her from a premature shock, Helen was safe, at all events, for a few hours.

Mrs. Jenkins and Annette retired to the waiting-room of the hall, and earnestly discussed the strange directions which they had just received. As a matter of course, they immediately seized on the morning paper of that day; for it had not escaped Mrs. Jenkins's characteristic acuteness that there was a decided inconsistency between Thornton Carey's statement that the news which he apprehended reaching Mrs. Gris-

wold had come in private telegram, and his question as to whether any newspapers had been taken to her room that day. 'Depend upon it,' said she to Justine, 'whatever it is, there is some hint of it in the dailies for to-day. Let us have a look.'

The papers lay, as they had done on the previous day, on the table in the waiting-room; the two women turned them over eagerly, but found nothing which they could suppose to have reference to the mysterious rumour to which Thornton Carey had vaguely alluded—the murder at Liverpool was still the leading theme.

'I cannot,' said Mrs. Jenkins, 'find out that anybody has come to grief except that unlucky Mr. Foster.'

Thornton Carey returned to the Fifth-avenue Hotel, where he found Bryan Duval, looking weary and dejected. The actor said little in reply to the narrative of the steps which he had taken. The little he did say was in approval, and then he

made a dreary effort to get away for a while from the terrible subject which was occupying them.

'I shall stay here all day,' said Thornton Carey, 'and wait for the telegram, and I really don't see that there is anything else to be done. But you had better go out and get a little fresh air to string yourself up for to-night's work—it will be hard to get through, I fancy.'

'Deuced hard,' said Bryan Duval. 'It is not the first time I have comedied on the boards and tragedied behind the scenes, but I do not know that I ever found the contrast so great a pull as this time—it is the unconsciousness of the woman that is so horrid; when she knows the worst, it will not be so bad. Good Heavens! only think, if she took it into her head to come to the theatre to-night!'

'There is not the slightest danger of that,' said Thornton Carey. 'I forgot to tell you that she has a heavy cold.'

But little more was said between them, and Bryan Duval took the young man's advice. He went out until it was time to go down to the theatre. About two hours later than the time at which Thornton Carey had rejoined him they met for a moment before the performance, and Thornton told him that no news had come; a message to the same effect was conveyed to Bryan Duval in a twisted note on his return after the play, but Thornton Carey made no attempt to see him again that night.

Once more the house had been crowded by an enthusiastic audience; again the performance had realised public expectation to the fullest extent. If possible, Bryan Duval had been more exquisitely humorous, had thrown more of his characteristic acuteness into his part, than on the previous evening. Miss Montressor had charmed all the spectators; but some of those who had been present at the first performance noticed

that she was slightly nervous, which she had not been on that occasion, and that she wore a little more rouge.

During the whole of that night Thornton Carey did not undress or lie down; the hours passed drearily away, and no message came to interrupt them. Just before the time at which Mrs. Griswold's house was usually closed and her servants retired, Jim had 'slipped round,' as he phrased it, to Fifth-avenue Hotel, and told Mr. Carey that his orders had been strictly observed; no callers, no news, no newspapers, no messages had been suffered to reach Mrs. Griswold, who was better, had got up rather late in the evening, and passed an hour in the nursery; but she had asked no dangerous questions, she had displayed no imprudent curiosity. She was in bed, and asleep, old Jim said, on the authority of Mrs. Jenkins, when he came out to report to Thornton Carey; but no telegram had been received.

This inexplicable circumstance sorely troubled and beset the mind of Thornton Carey. Advice, assistance from Warren, if not his actual presence, was entirely indispensable under the circumstances; but when the morning dawned, and when the letter-post hour was near, Thornton knew that the moment he dreaded so intensely had arrived, that no further delay was possible, and that that advice and assistance must be dispensed with.

At the early hour which had previously been agreed upon, Bryan Duval, Thornton Carey, and Miss Montressor—the trio had by this time become quite friends—left the hotel and proceeded on foot to Helen Griswold's house. As they reached it, the postman came up, with his usual quick important step, and delivered a few unimportant notes, which Jim, with a glance at Thornton Carey, who was ascending the steps, took from his hand. The three entered the house, the door was shut behind

them, and the letters just received were handed by the docile Jim to Carey.

'There is nothing here,' he remarked, laying them on the table in the waiting room. 'Jim, ring for the women.'

In answer to the customary summons, both Mrs. Jenkins and Annette came downstairs. The first thing to be done was to send up word, in reply to Mrs. Griswold's eager inquiry (made, as Mrs. Jenkins told them, the moment she awoke, only a few instants ago) as to whether letters from England were yet delivered, 'that they had not yet come.'

'Tell her this,' said Thornton Carey, 'and then tell her that I am here, and that I beg she will see me as soon as is convenient. If she asks why I come so early, say you do not know. It is too late to make any excuse now.'

'Is it true, sir,' said Mrs. Jenkins—'has anything really happened to Mr. Griswold?'

'It is too true,' said Duval, addressing

the wondering woman, whose eager interest and curiosity about him showed in every feature of her face, even in this crisis; 'it is too true—you will soon know all! In the mean time be more cautious than ever.'

Without a word Mrs. Jenkins returned up-stairs, whither Annette had preceded her, and Thornton Carey led the way into the dining-room, where the three sat in profound silence, interrupted after the interval of a few minutes by Mrs. Jenkins, who entered the room with a very pale face, and addressed Thornton Carey.

'She will see you, sir; she is just getting up, and Annette is dressing her as fast as she can. But—I hope you won't be angry, sir, or think it was my fault—I gave my message as matter-of-fact as could be, and the curtain was between me and her, so she could not see my face; but the very moment she heard you wanted to see her at this hour of the morning, she took fright. I suppose it was because she had not had the

English letters that she expected, and that disappointment had told upon her nerves, and helped to make her suspicious. She said she knew there was something wrong. "Go down," said she, "and say I will see him. Bring him up to the boudoir, and let him tell me whatever I have got to hear and bear." Not another word, sir, but she is as white as a corpse.'

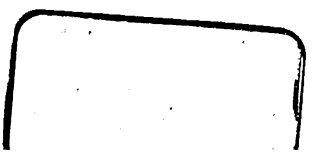
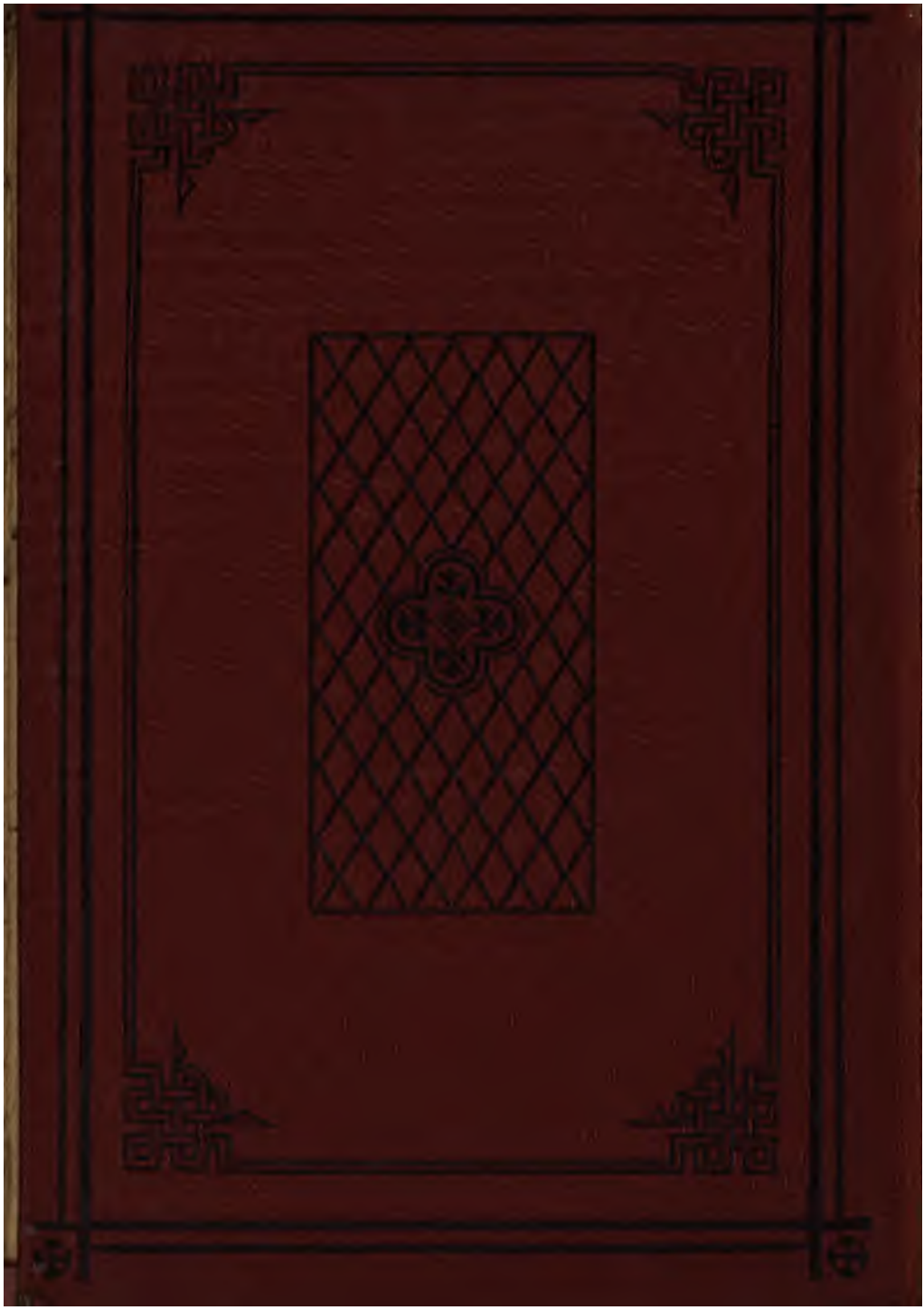
Thornton Carey had started up before Mrs. Jenkins had got through her first sentence, and turned a face of wild distress upon the other two.

'It cannot be helped,' said Bryan Duval, 'and it is better so. Go up with the good woman at once—for God's sake get it over.'

He, too, rose as he spoke, and turning abruptly towards the chimneypiece, laid his arms upon it, and hid his face in them.

Miss Montressor sat profoundly still, but the description her sister had just given of Helen might have been repeated of her —she, too, was as pale as a corpse.

Thornton Carey and Mrs. Jenkins went up-stairs without exchanging a single word. The door of Helen's boudoir opened in the corridor outside her bedroom. Mrs. Jenkins merely threw it open in passing, and the young man went in, while she entered the bedroom by the other door. No sound reached his strained ear for the few minutes during which he waited. At their expiration Helen came in. She wore a white muslin dressing-gown, and her hair was simply brushed behind her ears, and hung loose upon her shoulders. As she came through the door of her bedroom into the boudoir, she faced Thornton Carey directly, and her first glance at him told her that her fears had been prophetic—that he had bad news to tell.

END OF VOL. II.

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